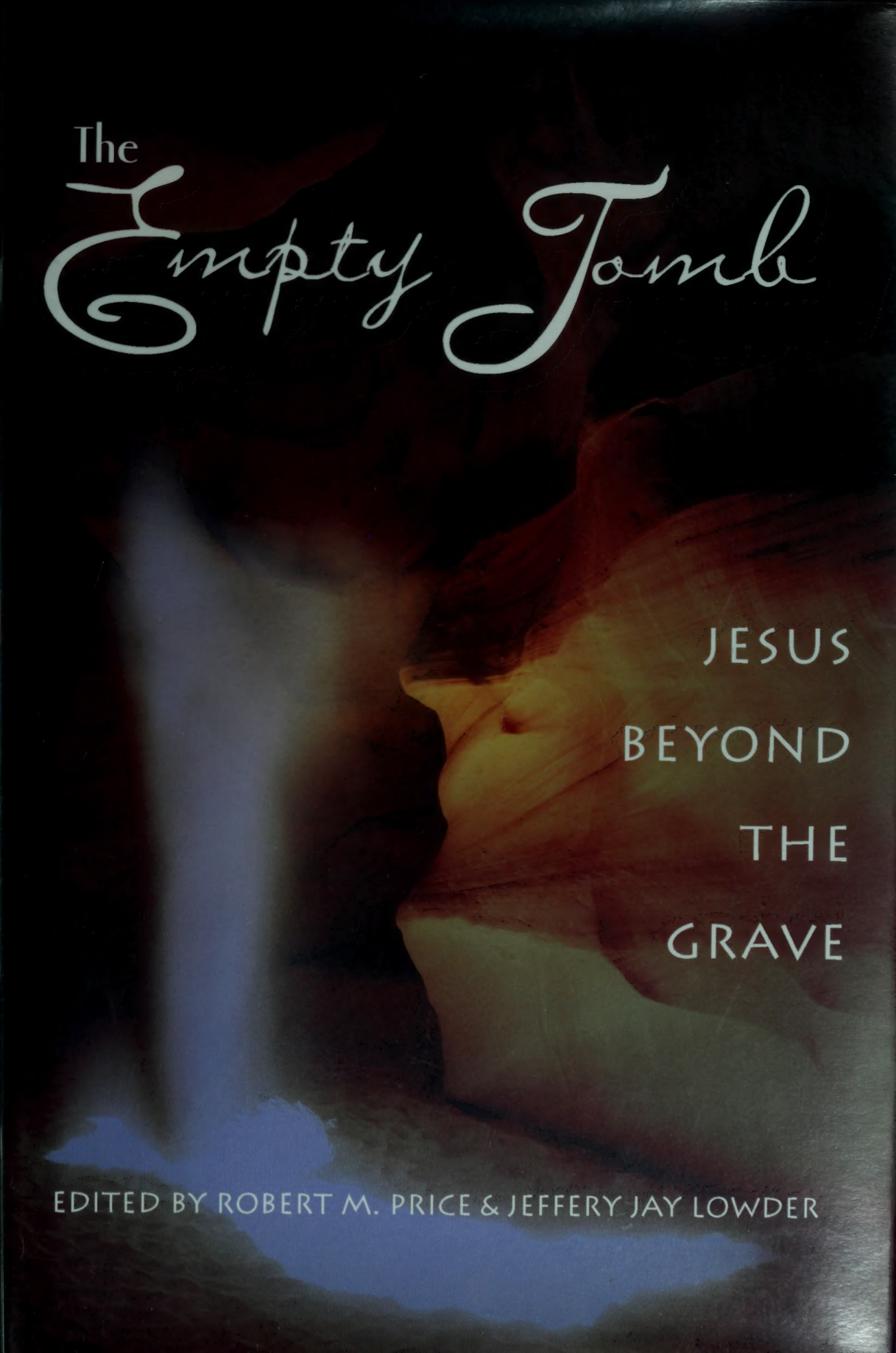
The Empty Tomb

JESUS BEYOND THE GRAVE



EDITED BY ROBERT M. PRICE & JEFFERY JAY LOWDER

07

The Empty Tomb

Did Jesus rise from the dead? Although nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century biblical scholarship dismissed resurrection narratives as late, legendary accounts, Christian apologists in the latter part of the twentieth century revived historical apologetics regarding the resurrection of Jesus with increasingly sophisticated arguments. A few critics have directly addressed some of the new arguments, but their response has been largely muted. *The Empty Tomb* scrutinizes the claims of leading Christian apologists, such as William Lane Craig and Richard Swinburne, and critiques their efforts to provide the best historical explanation for the resurrection.

The contributors include New Testament scholars J. Duncan M. Derrett and Robert M. Price, philosophers Theodore Drange and Michael Martin, historians Richard Carrier and Peter Kirby, and leading nontheists Keith Parsons, Jeffrey Jay Lowder, and others. They focus on the key questions relevant to assessing the historicity of the resurrection: What did the authors of the New Testament mean when they said Jesus rose from the dead? What historical evidence is needed to establish the resurrection? If there is a God, why would he resurrect Jesus? Was there an empty tomb? What should we make of the appearance stories? Apart from historical evidence, is belief in the resurrection justified?

The Empty Tomb provides a sober, objective response to arguments offered in defense of Christianity's central claim.

(continued on back flap)

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THE Empty Tomb

"It is not new for a few lonely, persecuted radicals to deny the resurrection of Jesus. What is new in this book is that such a number of competent, scrupulous scholars are agreeing that it did not happen, and going so far as attacking fundamentalists for propagating false and misleading views of the Bible."

Dr. Barbara Thiering
Author of *Jesus and the Riddle of the Dead Sea Scrolls*

"Price and his fellow authors study the Bible as a great ancient text steeped in mythology [and] do not thereby denigrate the text or become apologists for a Yahweh of Sinai or Mount of Transfiguration. They appreciate the Bible as a great literary tradition that generates problems and therefore requires new, imaginative attempts to address the problem. The dynamic tradition continues, and *The Empty Tomb: Jesus Beyond the Grave* proves to be a rigorous and creative part of it. These substantive, challenging articles are indispensable for better understanding how first-century Christianity emerged."

Joe E. Barnhart
Professor of Philosophy and Religion Studies,
University of North Texas;
author of *Religion and the Challenge of Philosophy*,
The Study of Religion and Its Meaning, and
The Billy Graham Religion Inquiry

"[A] bracing, dynamic collection of essays examining a central tenet of Christian faith—the resurrection of Jesus Christ after his crucifixion. . . . Sober, rigorous, and without any trace of malice, they nonetheless present a bold and inescapable challenge to orthodoxy. No reader, either believer or skeptic, can afford to ignore the arguments in this book."

S. T. Joshi
Author of *God's Defenders: What They Believe and Why They Are Wrong*

THE Empty Tomb

JESUS BEYOND THE GRAVE

EDITED BY ROBERT M. PRICE & JEFFERY JAY LOWDER

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To George A. Wells
and Richard Dawkins,
adepts at opening eyes,
not least our own.

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THE EMPTY TOMB

INTRODUCTION: THE SECOND LIFE OF JESUS

ROBERT M. PRICE

EMPTY TOMB AND EMPTY WORDS

"The second life of Jesus": this striking phrase from Friedrich Schleiermacher's *Life of Jesus*[1] contains like a seedpod all manner of implicit questions and problems concerning the central Christian belief in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Schleiermacher would have steadfastly affirmed his belief in the resurrection of the Redeemer (as he liked best to call him), but he seemed to have a double understanding of the term. Like subsequent liberal theologians Wilhelm Herrmann and Martin Kähler, and then Paul Tillich, Schleiermacher believed that Christian salvation, the uniquely Christian brand of piety or God-consciousness, was transmitted from generation to generation in the Christian community by setting forth (preaching) the picture of Jesus Christ as drawn from the New Testament gospels. For Schleiermacher, the piety of Jesus was seen most directly in Luke and John, especially the latter. As long as the personhood or personality of Jesus as the religious hero or ideal was available through the medium of gospel preaching, Jesus could be considered a living entity or a living force. And in this sense, he was raised. As Rudolf Karl Bultmann's view would later be summed up, Jesus had been "raised into the kerygma," into the preaching of the early church.

All this is a survival of Pietist talk of Jesus as a living, personal savior at the right hand of God in heaven as well as at one's elbow during one's devotional hour of prayer and Bible reading. "He walks with me, and he talks with me, and he tells me I am his own." Another liberal theologian, Albrecht Ritschl, did not like the sound of this and was very clear (as was Willi Marxsen, a later theologian) that Jesus' resurrection meant, not any personal survival, but rather that his *cause* continued despite his physical absence. In Ritschl' s terms, the danger was that, unless one stuck to the New Testament Jesus (as discerned by historical criticism), he might be replaced by a personal savior customized by one's own sentiments, neuroses, conscientious scruples, and who knows what else. The Jesus who walks and talks with the Pietist is talking with the Pietist's own voice. Herrmann, too, warned against this. His Jesus-picture had to be strictly gospel-derived, and he posited no give-and-take interaction with a living Jesus.

Schleiermacher, like Adolf Harnack and Paul Tillich after him, stressed that the Redeemer was communicating the Father, not the Son. He was promoting God-consciousness, not Christ-consciousness, and for these theologians Christ remained the medium of that God-consciousness. They didn't think Christianity was some sort of Jesus personality cult.

But did Schleiermacher believe Jesus himself remained alive in any more than a metaphorical sense? Yes, and no. He believed, with some of the eighteenth-century Rationalists of whom D. F. Strauss made such pitiless sport, that Jesus had been crucified, placed in a tomb, and that he subsequently appeared to his grieving disciples. He defended the resurrection accounts at least of Luke and John (dismissing Mark and Matthew as secondary, just the opposite of Albert Schweitzer after him). These gospels were based on good, eyewitness testimony, Schleiermacher thought (though his arguments no longer convince many). But Schleiermacher was equally committed to the Deistic-style denial of miracles. Or rather, he rejected the notion of miracles as "mid-course corrections" entailing the temporary suspension of natural regularities. No, à la Spinoza, he thought it most pious to posit that the Creator had got it right the first time out, and that his divine hand was to be seen precisely in nature's regularity. "To me, all is miracle!" Schleiermacher declared. The simple fact of being alive at all is truly miraculous! But once they die, people do not return to life. That sort of miracle, for whatever it might be worth, does not happen, and it dishonors the Almighty to suggest that it does. For then one makes God into

a sorcerer or a genie. So Schleiermacher, advocate of gospel accuracy and of unbroken natural law, was forced to adopt the Swoon Theory, or *Scheintod*, apparent death, theory. He said Jesus had awakened to "a second life," though the theologian did not venture to guess what Jesus might have busied himself with and for how long. Other advocates of the theory have filled in the blank, making Jesus travel to Japan, to India, to Kashmir, to Britain, to Rome. Today, New Testament scholar J. Duncan M. Derret and specialist in the Dead Sea Scrolls Barbara Thiering are the major advocates of this theory, and it is by no means absurd. People, as Josephus informs us, occasionally survived crucifixion.

Discussions of Jesus' resurrection often distinguish between it and the merely temporary resuscitations of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:41–42), the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:14–15), and Lazarus of Bethany (John 11:43–44). Whereas these others, we are told, were "recalled to life" only for a while, only to die again later, Jesus was translated to a whole new plane of existence, one summed up in the terminology of a "spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44) that could defy the laws of nature, walking through walls and yet eating food, bearing fresh wounds, yet never to die again. I would like to know how theologians or New Testament exegetes presume to know what finally happened to Lazarus and the others. Scripture does not say they died again. And in Matthew 27:52–53 when we see multitudes of local saints rise from their tombs in the vicinity of Jerusalem, are we to suppose they were on a mere furlough from Sheol, due back after Easter vacation? Surely for this writer, the general resurrection of the just had begun! So maybe Jesus' resurrection was not supposed to be so different from Lazarus'. That is, maybe Lazarus is still alive today, hiding out in Cyprus, where church legends appointed him bishop after his resurrection. Or maybe the writer assumed he died again some years later, and that Jesus did, too! Schleiermacher thought so!

CHAINS OF IRONY

Let us just float two significant ironies entailed in the efforts of apologists like William Lane Craig, Craig Blomberg, and others discussed in the essays in the present collection. Neither one is often, or ever, noticed as far as I am aware. First is the implicit absurdity of the notion that Jesus is still alive, after two thousand years, in the personal, individual-consciousness mode intended by

evangelical apologists who, after all, want to defend and preach a gospel of Jesus as the personal savior, with whom, remember, one walks and talks, who awaits one at the cozy hearth of one's heart (as in Robert Boyd Munger's classic *My Heart, Christ's Home*[2]) in order to have fellowship as one friend with another. We must ask if this evangelical-pietistic Jesus is to be pictured like Mel Brooks's comedy character the Two-Thousand-Year-Old Man, whom Harvey Corman used to interview about the remote past. Has Jesus grown older and wiser in all these years? Is he immune from senility? Does he ever forget a face? And how on earth, having anything like a true human consciousness, can he possibly keep up with all the devotional conversations he is supposed to be having with every evangelical? It is exactly like the belief in Santa's visiting every child's home throughout the earth during a single evening. But the best explosion of the whole idea comes in no dull prose of mine, but rather in a brilliant *Saturday Night Live* skit when the Risen Jesus (Phil Hartman) appears in the suburban kitchen of a fundamentalist housewife (Sally Field) to ask her to ease up on the constant prayers for mundane trivialities! He concludes it was a bad idea, wipes her memory, and returns to heaven after she breaks down into sobbing hysterics: as a Christian, wasn't she supposed to believe in a personal Lord who cared about every moment of her every day? Sure she was, and that is why no Pietist ever notices the absurdity, any more than any kid dares question how Santa completes his rounds. The belief in the resurrection of a personal savior who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, is crucial to a particular, very widespread type of piety. It is the emotional equivalent to Bhakti mysticism in Hinduism and Buddhism, where one chooses a personal savior from an available menu (Krishna, Amida, Kali, Ram, Siva, etc.) and focuses emotional worship on him or her in order to receive saving grace. Jesus as we read him in the gospels (as one's church interprets him) and equally in Sunday School books and movies *must still be available* or there is no "personal relationship with Christ."

In the same way, even for traditional Christians who are not Pietistic in the same way but do believe in miracles and the supernatural—Christians like C. S. Lewis, for example—Jesus must have risen from the dead in a supernatural, historical form, something not metaphorical, because otherwise it would seem arbitrary to look forward to a clear-cut immortality of our own. One might simply believe in it as a plausible or attractive idea as Plato did, or Kant, but the Christian is interested in some sort of reassurance, some

kind of proof. And thus apologists love to make the claim (a claim that will be exploded many times in the course of this book) that the resurrection of Jesus is the best-attested event in history. The irony here is that the claim is always made amid a plethora of probabilistic arguments the very existence of which demonstrates that the resurrection is anything but an open-and-shut case. If apologists themselves did not realize the difficulty of their case they would waste no more time with skeptical objections to the resurrection than they do refuting, say, beliefs that Jesus was a space alien.

WHICH IS EMPTIER: THE TOMB OR LOCH NESS?

But the second great and fundamental irony is implied in the very attempt to marshal demonstrations and probabilistic, evidential arguments for the resurrection of Jesus as a miracle. A claim that can be proven by employing a set of criteria cannot in principle transcend those criteria, can it? If you can offer scientific proof for the Star of Bethlehem, as popular apologists do every Christmas season, claiming it corresponds to some ancient supernova or planetary alignment, you have thereby evacuated the phenomenon of all its miraculous character. A planetary alignment cannot stand specifically over one single house in Bethlehem! If the apologists are right, the Bible is wrong. And if we try to apply the "save the appearances" tactic to "proving" the resurrection rationally, we begin to experience a sense of *déjà vu*: we are led squarely and directly to the *Scheintod*, the only apparent death, the second earthly life of Jesus. That is what you get if you prove Jesus was crucified, that he was buried, that he was nonetheless seen days later by his disciples.

But what if, like Leslie Weatherhead and others, you think there is sufficient reason to accept that the living are visited by their recently deceased loved ones, in an ectoplasmic form? Have you managed to introduce a miraculous element? No, you haven't. The idea is that the "science" of parapsychology posits hitherto unknown laws of nature which might explain the phenomena of the crucifixion, burial, and appearances in yet another way that need not revert to supernaturalism. That is the difference between prophecy and clairvoyance, alchemy and chemistry.

Or let us go back to Jesus as a space alien. Why do eccentrics like this idea? Precisely because it, too, seems to promise to "save the appearances" of the

gospel stories by substituting acceptable scientific causal links in place of supernaturalism. Jesus was not "virgin born," but rather artificially inseminated into Mary by the superior technology of aliens. His miracles were the application of astounding alien medicine, like Dr. McCoy's healing spree in the barbaric twentieth-century hospital in *Star Trek IV*. His death and burial? Real enough! But then he was scientifically regenerated like Klaatu was by the robot Gort in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. True, we don't yet understand how they did it, but we can rest assured it was all factual and all scientific in nature.

This is where you are headed if you imagine a claim like the supernatural resurrection of Jesus from the dead by his heavenly Father can be proven by scientific or historical arguments. Whatever you prove this way can never transcend the framework of the criteria you try to employ. Again, just like the Star of Bethlehem. If the apologists are right on that one, the story has no more to do with the miraculous than the Nile turning to blood does as Immanuel Velikovsky explains it: proximity to Mars made it look red! Interesting if true, but theologically unremarkable.

IS THERE A PROBLEM HERE?

Is there even anything that requires any special explanation when we approach the New Testament resurrection materials? The contributors to this symposium do not think so. We are not surprised to encounter stories in which a divine figure is shown being glorified and deified after martyrdom, appearing to his followers for last words of instruction and encouragement, and then ascends into the realm of the gods. Such elements are common to the Mythic Hero Archetype and are thus embodied in tales all over the world and throughout history. One may discover them, along with other noteworthy data paralleling the career of Jesus in the gospels, in the legends of Oedipus, Apollonius of Tyana, Asclepius, Hercules, Romulus, Empedocles, and others. Specifically, the notion of a death and resurrection that accompanies, celebrates, facilitates, or coincides with the change of seasons and renewal of nature is so common in the very neighborhood of the gospels, attested as far back as the Baal religion of the Old Testament, that it is just no surprise to find the common mythemes all over the New Testament. What we read of Jesus, we have already read concerning Adonis, Tammuz, Osiris, Attis, and

others. There is just nothing unique here (though of course each particular version has accumulated specific points of distinctiveness, as we would expect). Apologists have for a generation or two succeeded in distracting attention from the force, even the existence, of these parallels by a series of specious, special-pleading arguments that can no longer be taken seriously (never could, really) by serious students of comparative religion and myth.

The kinship of New Testament narrative and belief with those of the adjacent cultures ought to be taken for granted to such an extent by serious biblical critics (as it was in the days of the *Religionsgeschichtlicheschule*, or History of Religions school of scholarship, the influence of which so enriches Bultmann's still-masterful *Theology of the New Testament*[3]), that the real issue of debate ought to be whether there was a historical Jesus at the core of all the mythology. And indeed one would find vigorous debate among the contributors to the present collection on that issue.

KNOWING WHO YOUR FRIENDS ARE

When we find we must spend time disabusing students of Christian origins of the red herrings strewn about with gleeful abandon by apologists, we critics of traditional supernaturalism find ourselves in a strange and seemingly ironic position. We view ourselves, contrary to the perspective our own critics and debating opponents have on us, as the true champions and friends of the Bible. We are viewed as insidious villains seeking to undermine the belief of the faithful, trying to push them off the heavenly path and into Satan's arms. But this is not how we view ourselves at all. Whatever religious or nonreligious convictions we have, we find ourselves entering the field, as we see it, as the champions and zealots for a straightforward and accurate understanding of the Bible as an ancient text, and of the resurrection accounts as natural accoutrements of such literature. In our opinion, it is the fundamentalist, the apologist for Christian supernaturalism, who is propagating false and misleading views of the Bible among the general populace. We are not content to know better and to shake our heads at the foolishness of the untutored masses. We want the Bible to be appreciated for what it is, not for what it is not. And it is not a supernatural oracle book filled with infallible dogmas and wild tales that must be believed at the risk of eternal peril.

There was a generation of Bible debaters who naively took for granted that the Bible made the claims that its misguided proponents made for it. But we belong to a newer generation. We do not hate the Bible or view it as another version of *Mein Kampf,* as some critics of religion have. We do not seek to debunk it, for it is not bunk, any more than the *Iliad* or *Beowulf* is bunk. To frame the issue in such terms is itself a foolish fundamentalism in reverse. The arguments of this book are not attempts to debunk the Bible but to understand it better as what it is: a great ancient text of mythology. When we attack the arguments of apologists, we believe ourselves to be doing the same sort of thing our Classicist colleagues would be doing if they had to reckon with an eccentric movement of apologists for the Olympian gods, zealots who wanted to convince people they must believe in Zeus and Achilles. Classicists would rally to the cause precisely because they loved the old texts and did not want to stand by and allow them to be distorted and made to look ridiculous by grotesque demands that they are literally true!

But have we not, in arguing against the factual veracity of a belief in the resurrection of Jesus, argued against Christian faith nonetheless? Is it naive to think we have not? Or is it disingenuous to claim we have not? Not at all! The whole problem that haunts these discussions is the failure of some religious believers to separate issues of historical scholarship from personal investment in the outcome of the investigation. We have no chance of arriving at accurate results so long as we feel, whether we admit it or not, that we cannot afford for certain possible conclusions to be true. The minute we allow desire, fear, or party loyalty to overrule judgment, we have corrupted the integrity of our judgment and entered upon the worst kind of casuistical "ends justify the means" strategy. We can never again be trusted, or dare to trust ourselves. No worthy faith can have intellectual dishonesty, really cynicism, as one of its pillars.

WARRANT FOR DEICIDE?

Jesus is dead. Are these fighting words? It is sad that they are. For again, there ought to be nothing unusual here. Abraham Lincoln is dead. Albert Einstein is dead. Marie Curie is dead. There is nothing shameful about it. And we must wonder if it does not actually denigrate the achievements of a figure if his greatness is taken to hinge upon the denial of the fact that he is

dead. Is not his legacy great enough? I think I detect here a microcosmic version of the common argument, if you can call it that, that there must be life after death, eternal life, because otherwise life here and now would be meaningless. The answer is simple: if you cannot find meaning inherent in life right now, as you live it in this visible world, the addition of an infinite amount more of the same isn't about to somehow make it any more meaningful! Add a whole string of zeroes to a zero and watch what happens.

Even so, if the significance of Jesus is not clear from what we can know of his earthly life, adding on a resurrected infinite life at the right hand of God is not going to lend him some importance he did not already have. Remember the hilarious sequence in C. S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce*[4] in which a Church of England bishop with chic modernist ideas comes up from hell for a day trip to heaven, not even realizing he has been in hell? He tells his old colleague, a bright spirit among the redeemed, about a paper he plans to present to the theological society back home. The subject: what the mature thought of Jesus might have been like had he not been tragically killed so young! The ghostly bishop seems to have grasped the logic of resurrection faith more acutely than Lewis meant for his readers to see: if the truth of Jesus is limited to the teachings of, say, the Sermon on the Mount, should we be disappointed? Would a resurrected eternity of Jesus at the right hand of God in heaven add value to that teaching that it does not already possess? Ask Dr. King, or Count Tolstoy, or Mahatma Gandhi.

And here we must recall Ritschl's caveat: if we think there is an ongoing existence of Jesus in the experience (imagination, more likely) of the Pietist believer, this latter becomes "the real thing" for the believer, overshadowing and outweighing the gospel Jesus, supplanting any historical Jesus. Jesus seems to have said a lot more to Julian of Norwich, Thomas à Kempis, Robert Boyd Munger, and even Elizabeth Claire Prophet than he did to anyone in ancient Galilee. So the name "Jesus" becomes as meaningless as Coca Cola as soon as they change the formula. Are you still having a Coke when it is Vanilla Caffeine-free Diet Coke? Here, ironically, is the answer to our earlier question as to whether, after two thousand years of conscious human awareness, Jesus' mind would have changed, his opinions transformed, and so on. Apparently so, as the pious imagination continues to attribute its fancies and judgments to the Jesus it imagines to be speaking to it, a risen Jesus who is still available. If there was a historical Jesus, he is long lost in the shuffle.

"Personal savior" Christianity is the product of the Pietist movement of the seventeenth century. It didn't exist before then. But there was the tradition of ongoing prophecy in the name of the Risen One, and that began already in the first century, as witnessed in *The Book of Revelation* or the *Odes of Solomon*. And, as Bultmann showed long ago, it was this mode of the postmortem continuance of the slain Jesus that quickly obscured any genuine memory of what the historical Jesus might actually have said. The early charismatics drew no distinction between the quotes of the Galilean sage and the oracles of the Risen Savior, any more than does the authoress of *A Course in Miracles*.[5] And as a result, we can no longer tell what the real Jesus (if any) really said. When Ritschl warned of the danger of the living Christ of experience supplanting the historical Jesus, he was much too late. The horse had long since gotten out of the barn and was far away.

All of which is to say that even from a theological viewpoint, the Christian doctrine of the resurrection is not above criticism. Thus whoever thinks to dismiss the essays in this volume as the polemical screed of Christ haters or Bible denigrators is only making it easy for himself, giving himself a false excuse not to give searching scrutiny to important issues of interest equally to traditional believers, skeptics, and critical theologians. But no. Come, let us reason together.

Robert M. Price
July 11, 2002

NOTES

1. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Life of Jesus*, ed. Jack C. Verheyden, trans. S. Maclean Gilmour (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).

2. Robert Boyd Munger, *My Heart, Christ's Home: A Story for Old and Young* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992).

3. Rudolf Karl Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Scribner, 1951–55).

4. C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce: A Dream* (London: G. Bles, 1945).

5. Helen Schucman, *A Course in Miracles* (Glen Elen, CA: Foundation for Inner Peace, 1992).

1

IS THERE SUFFICIENT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE TO ESTABLISH THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS?

ROBERT GREG CAVIN

A lively debate has taken place over the last several years concerning the possibility of establishing the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus. Although many crucial issues have been discussed, e.g., the reliability of the New Testament Easter traditions, other problems, equally important, remain too long overlooked. It is the purpose of this paper to consider one of these neglected problems. I shall argue, in particular, that because resurrection entails the transformation of a corpse into a supernatural body, our only sources of potential evidence, viz., the New Testament Easter traditions, do not provide sufficient information to enable us to establish the historicity of the resurrection—even on the assumption of their complete historical reliability.

In order to appreciate this problem, it is necessary to consider two matters. First, it is necessary to consider what precisely is being claimed as being established by the New Testament Easter traditions by those who claim that these are sufficient to establish the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus. That is, it is necessary to consider what exactly the resurrection is conceived by these individuals to be and, accordingly, what kind of evidence would be required to establish it. Second, it is necessary to consider what kind of evidence is actually afforded by the New Testament Easter traditions and, correlatively, what this evidence is capable of establishing. I shall discuss these matters in turn.

Let us thus first examine the concept of resurrection supposed by those who claim that there is sufficient evidence to establish the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus, most notably, William Lane Craig, Gary R. Habermas, Murray J. Harris, George Eldon Ladd, and Wolfhart Pannenberg.[1] According to this concept, resurrection is the transformation of a corpse into a living supernatural body (σωμα πνευματικόν)[2] and, as such, is to be sharply distinguished from the resuscitation of a dead individual to the ordinary, premortem state of life (e.g., Lazarus in John 11:39–44).[3] Typical here is the analysis given by Craig:

> Resurrection is not resuscitation. The mere restoration of life to a corpse is not a resurrection. A person who has resuscitated returns only to this earthly life and will die again.[4]

In contrast:

> Jesus rose to eternal life in a radically transformed body that can be described as immortal, glorious, powerful, and supernatural. In this new mode of existence he was not bound by the physical limitations of this universe, but possessed superhuman powers.[5]

This concept of resurrection, of course, comes directly from the New Testament where the term ανάστασιζ (resurrection) is reserved exclusively for that species of revivification affirmed of both Jesus on the third day and the dead at the end of this age—but never applied to resuscitation.[6] This is clear from the biblical passages that are constitutive of this concept, e.g., the saying ascribed to Jesus in Luke 20:36:

> Those accounted worthy to attain . . . the resurrection from the dead . . . cannot die any more, because they are equal to the angels.

and the Pauline teaching of 1 Corinthians 15:42–44b:

> So is it with the resurrection from the dead.
> What is sown is perishable,
> what is raised is imperishable.
> It is sown in dishonor,
> it is raised in glory.

It is sown in weakness,
it is raised in power.

As is evident from these passages, the resurrection body on the concept we are examining possesses a number of quite extraordinary dispositional properties. Let us look briefly at those given most prominence by the individuals, noted above, who suppose this concept. It has already been observed, in the second quotation from Craig, that the resurrection body is immortal—it is impossible for it to die. Those who are resurrected, for example, cannot suffocate or be killed by poison, fire, or electrocution. Beyond mere immortality, however, which is compatible with eternity spent as, say, a leper or a quadriplegic, the resurrection body possesses the much stronger property of imperishability; i.e., as Craig, Harris, and Ladd have observed, it cannot suffer deterioration or deformity or, indeed, any kind or degree of physical indignity.[7] This has three important logical consequences. First, it is impossible for the resurrection body to age—it cannot wrinkle or lose its firmness or become frail with ever-increasing time.[8] Second, the resurrection body is insusceptible to all illness and disease, e.g., it cannot contract the common cold or AIDS, and thus enjoys absolutely perfect health.[9] Third, the resurrection body cannot be injured in any way, e.g., it cannot be blinded by acid or bruised in a fall or cut by a sword or be otherwise disfigured or maimed.[10] In addition to imperishability, finally, the resurrection body also possesses enormous power—in particular, as Ladd and Craig have observed, the power to move instantaneously from place to place, i.e., to vanish and reappear, at will, without regard for spatial distances.[11] Lazarus, of course, once resuscitated, would have to walk in order to get around; he would be doomed to continue to age, to become sick or injured on occasion, and eventually to die again. But this is not possible, on the concept we are examining, for one who has undergone resurrection from the dead.

Now, from this brief review of the concept of resurrection held by those who claim that there is sufficient historical evidence to establish the resurrection of Jesus, it is clear that the hypothesis of the resurrection is *not* to be identified with the "comparatively weak claim of revivification:"

AN INFINITELY GREAT CLAIM IN ITSELF!

(1) Jesus died and afterward he became alive once again.

which is strictly neutral between the hypotheses of Jesus' resurrection and resuscitation. Rather, the resurrection hypothesis is logically equivalent to the much bolder claim:

(2) Jesus died and afterward he was transformed into a living supernatural body.

which entails not only (1) but also the following dispositional propositions:

(3) Jesus became no longer able to die.
(4) Jesus became no longer able to age.
(5) Jesus became no longer able to be sick.
(6) Jesus became no longer able to be injured.
(7) Jesus became able to move at will instantaneously from place to place.[12]

Correlatively, it is clear that those who claim that the New Testament Easter traditions are sufficient to establish the resurrection hypothesis are claiming not merely that there is sufficient evidence to establish (1) but, quite significantly, that this evidence is sufficient to establish the much stronger hypothesis (2) and, in consequence, the specific dispositional propositions it logically implies, viz., (3) through (7). This can be seen once again in the typical claims they make regarding this matter, e.g., the following claim by Habermas:

> The evidence shows that the claims of the earliest eyewitnesses have been vindicated—Jesus' literal Resurrection from the dead in a glorified, spiritual body is the best explanation for the facts.[13]

Now that we have seen how resurrection is conceived by those who claim that the New Testament Easter traditions are sufficient to establish the resurrection of Jesus, we can begin to consider what kind of evidence is required to establish the resurrection hypothesis. Here it is crucial to avoid the mistake of those who, neglectful of this (the biblical) concept, have been tempted to suppose that establishing the hypothesis of the resurrection is merely a matter of establishing the conjunction of two singular historical propositions, viz.:

(1) Jesus died and afterward he became alive once again.

For example, Thomas Sherlock in his classic *Tryal of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus* argues that:

> A man rising from the dead is an object of sense, and can give the same evidence of his being alive, as any other man in the world can give. So that a resurrection considered only as a fact to be proved by evidence is a plain case: it requires no greater ability in the witnesses, than that they be able to distinguish between a man dead and a man alive; a point in which I believe every man living thinks himself a judge.[14]

Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. The problem here is that Sherlock has confused the relatively weak claim of revivification (1) with the much bolder resurrection hypothesis:

(2) Jesus died and afterward he was transformed into a living supernatural body.

But now, while (1) may well be established through sense perception by the kind of two-step procedure envisaged by Sherlock, this is quite impossible in the case of (2). For (2) logically implies not only (1) but dispositional propositions (3) through (7)—which alone distinguish it from the hypothesis of Jesus' resuscitation. Accordingly, in order to establish the resurrection hypothesis it will also be necessary to establish these dispositional propositions. As will now be explained, however, establishing (3) through (7), in order to establish the hypothesis of the resurrection, requires far more than merely establishing singular propositions about the past.

Dispositional propositions (3) through (7), of course, are singular propositions, containing the proper name 'Jesus.' However, these propositions are also, in part, universal generalizations that make very bold claims about the past, the present, and all times of the future. To see this, note that (3) through (7), as logical consequences of (2), must be understood as elliptical propositions that (within the limitations of our best information) make implicit reference to the approximate time of the alleged events they relate, viz., the period from 30 to 33 CE.[15] This is because (2) itself, as understood by those who hold that there is sufficient evidence to establish the resurrection of Jesus,

is not the temporally vague claim that the resurrection occurred at some time or other in the past, but rather, the comparatively definite proposition:

(2) Jesus was transformed into a living supernatural body sometime, after his death, between 30 and 33 CE.

(For example, (2) is clearly understood in the literature, despite its lack of explicit temporal reference, as being incompatible with a date for the resurrection during the time of Moses or World War II.) Thus, dispositional propositions (3) through (7), as logical consequences of (2), contain this implicit temporal reference as well. As a result, however, these propositions also consist, in part, of universal generalizations about the past, the present, and all times of the future. Consider, for example, this dispositional proposition:

(6) Jesus became no longer able to be injured.

This asserts that Jesus became no longer able to be injured at some (unspecified) time between 30 and 33 CE and thus (in part) that immediately before this time Jesus was not unable to be injured whereas at all times after this time he has been/will be unable to be injured. Accordingly, (6) has as a major constituent a universal generalization about the past, the present, and all times of the future, viz.:

(8) Jesus is unable to be injured at any time after 33 CE.

Similarly, dispositional propositions (3) through (5) and (7) have the following universal generalizations as major components as well:

(9) Jesus is unable to die at any time after 33 CE.
(10) Jesus is unable to age at any time after 33 CE.
(11) Jesus is unable to be sick at any time after 33 CE.
(12) Jesus is able to move at will instantaneously from place to place at any time after 33 CE.

These universal generalizations, moreover, make claims of a very strong kind since they concern the dispositional properties of Jesus' resurrection body. (8),

for example, does not claim that it is a mere matter of happenstance at each time after 33 CE that nothing injures Jesus. Rather, it claims that at any such time nothing *can* injure Jesus—that this is a physiological impossibility. It is clear, then, that very bold universal generalizations are constituents of dispositional propositions (3) through (7) and, as such, logical consequences of the resurrection hypothesis (2). Accordingly, in order to establish (2) it will also be necessary to establish these universal generalizations.

But now consider what kind of evidence is required to establish universal generalizations (8) through (12). Let us pursue this matter by looking more generally at any proposition of the form:

(13) Object s is able/unable to ϕ at any time after τ.

There would seem to be only two possible ways of establishing such a proposition—depending upon the extent of our previous experience with objects of the same kind as s. We will consider each of these and then apply the results to determine specifically what kind of evidence is required to establish universal generalizations (8) through (12).

First consider those cases in which s is an object of a kind ψ of which we have had considerable previous experience. Here it may be possible, without the need for direct testing, to establish a proposition of the form of (13) "from above," i.e., by deriving it as a consequence from some previously well-established general hypothesis of the form that links objects of kind ψ with the permanent ability/inability to ϕ, viz.:

(14) Objects that are ψ at a given time are able/unable to ϕ at any time thereafter.

The evidence we will need to accomplish this is simply the corresponding proposition of the form:

(15) Object s is ψ at time τ.

Thus, for example, suppose that a clay pot is fired in a kiln on May 14, 2024. Then we can establish the dispositional proposition:

(16) The clay pot is brittle at any time after May 14, 2024.

without ever actually having to try to crack, fragment, or shatter the pot by simply appealing to the well-established generalization:

(17) Clay that is fired in a kiln at a given time is brittle at any time thereafter.

in conjunction with the particular observation-based proposition:

(18) The clay pot was fired in a kiln on May 14, 2024.

Now consider those cases in which s is the kind of object of which we have had little or no previous experience, so that we lack generalizations regarding the properties of objects of this kind. Here it will be necessary to establish a proposition of the form of (13) "from below," i.e., by gathering information about s that *directly* tests it for the ability/inability to ϕ at any time after τ. Suppose, for example, that an old tree stump, found soaking in a vat of some unknown fluid labeled "E.K.S.," retains the substance, but in solidified form, after its removal from the vat. Then, since, *ex hypothesi*, we have no generalizations regarding the behavior of wood saturated with this substance, it will be necessary in order to establish one or the other of the following dispositional hypotheses:

(19) The stump is flammable at any time after its removal from the vat.
(20) The stump is not flammable at any time after its removal from the vat.

to directly test the stump to see whether it in fact burns. It is crucial, however, not only in this case, but again, in any case generally, that our evidence concerning object s constitute a *genuine* test of its ability/inability to ϕ at any time after τ. Indeed, it is an acknowledged principle of inductive logic that such a test must provide a considerable number of independent instances (propositions based ultimately upon observation) acquired over a long period of time in which s does/does not ϕ under a wide variety of circumstances in which ϕ-ing occurs. To see this, consider, for example, what kind of evidence

would be required to establish proposition (20), whose negative form makes this requirement particularly acute. It will not do, clearly, even to have a large number of observations made at various times that merely yield the information that the stump is not on fire.[16] The problem, of course, is that this information does not tell us whether the stump has been exposed to conditions that cause combustion on these occasions and, thus, cannot minimize the probability that it has not—that the stump is actually flammable at these times. What a genuine test of (20) must do, accordingly, is minimize this probability by providing evidence in which the stump fails to burn even though it is exposed to considerable heat (e.g., by being placed in a flame) while in the presence of oxygen. Moreover, such observations must be made under a wide variety of circumstances conducive to combustion in order to minimize the still remaining probability that our evidence (instances in which the stump is not on fire under conditions that cause combustion) is due merely to coincidence or some unsuspected transient factor, e.g., an undetected electric field that, only when present, creates a rearrangement of the molecules of E.K.S. within the wood fibers that prevents their reaction with oxygen to produce combustion. Finally, since the stump is being tested for *permanent* nonflammability, it is also necessary to gather our items of evidence, not just at a few times that occur fairly close together, but rather, over a large number of times that are spread far apart. The upshot of this discussion, then, is that in order to establish universal generalizations of the form of (13) "from below" it will be necessary (and indeed sufficient) to have as evidence a large number of independent instances acquired over a relatively long period of time in which object s is exposed to a wide variety of conditions that cause ϕ-ing and yet does/does not ϕ.

In light of this general background we can now see specifically what kind of evidence is required to establish universal generalizations (8) through (12). Consider first what would be required to establish these propositions "from above." The task here, again, is to avoid the need for directly testing propositions (8) through (12) by deriving them from some well-established generalization of the form:

(21) Individuals who are ψ at a given time are unable to ϕ at any time thereafter.

that links individuals of kind ψ with the permanent inability to ϕ, i.e., to die, to age, and so forth. To accomplish this, accordingly, we will need as our evidence the corresponding singular proposition of the form:

(22) Jesus was an individual of kind ψ sometime between 30 and 33 CE.

For example, it might be possible to use the historical proposition:

(23) Jesus was executed for claiming to be the Son of God and then revivified in vindication of that claim sometime between 30 and 33 CE.

in conjunction with the generalization:

(24) Anyone who at a given time is executed for claiming to be the Son of God and then revivified in vindication of that claim is unable to be sick at any time thereafter.

to establish:

(11) Jesus is unable to be sick at any time after 33 CE.

We could do this, of course, provided that (23) is among the items of evidence we have at our disposal and that (24) is a well-established general hypothesis. Propositions (8) through (10) and (12) could be established "from above" in this same way.

Next consider what would be required to establish universal generalizations (8) through (12) "from below." As is clear from our earlier discussion, here we will need as our evidence a large number of independent instances gathered over a relatively long period of time in which Jesus is placed under and passes a wide variety of genuine tests of the dispositional properties posited in these propositions. Thus, for example, consider:

(8) Jesus is unable to be injured at any time after 33 CE.

This is a generalization of staggering proportions! It implies such things as, for example, that Jesus can never be blinded by acid, that he can never be bruised by stones, that he can never be poisoned by snake venom, that he can never be pierced by a speeding bullet, that he can never break his arm falling off the tallest skyscraper, and that he can never be so much as even singed by the blast of a hundred-thousand-megaton hydrogen bomb! To establish (8) "from below," accordingly, it will be insufficient to merely adduce as evidence a proposition like:

(25) Jesus had no injury on a small number of occasions (about a dozen) that occurred during a brief period of time (forty days) after his revivification, sometime between 30 and 33 CE.

The problem, of course, is that (25) omits several crucial items—information that is essential for establishing (8), viz., whether the revivified Jesus was actually subjected to injurious agents at the times to which it refers, what kinds of agents (if any) these were, what the attending circumstances were on these occasions, and so on. As a result, (25) makes (8) no more probable than it makes obvious the competing hypotheses, in particular, that Jesus (like Lazarus) was "merely" resuscitated and just happened to avoid injury during the brief period of time he was observed, that Jesus was able to withstand only certain injurious agents, that Jesus' ability to withstand injury was only temporary (due to some special transient factor), and so forth. Accordingly, in order to minimize the probability of these alternatives and thus establish universal generalization (8) "from below," it will be necessary to have as our evidence the much stronger proposition:

(26) Jesus was subjected to a wide variety of injurious agents (e.g., the scourge, hydrochloric acid, cyanide capsules, etc.) under various conditions (e.g., the absence of air, temperatures below –320.5° F) on a large number of independent occasions between 30 and 2024 CE and suffered no injury at any of them.

Propositions (9) through (12) will have to be established "from below" in essentially the same way. It must be emphasized, however, in the case of:

(10) Jesus is unable to age at any time after 33 CE.

that it will be necessary to amass our evidence over a very long period of time—years if not centuries or even millennia—since this is the only way to detect signs of the aging process (e.g., increasing wrinkling of skin, graying and loss of hair, advancement of Alzheimer's Disease, rheumatoid arthritis, etc.). It is also necessary to note in the case of:

(12) Jesus is able to move at will instantaneously from place to place at any time after 33 CE.

that we will need numerous instances in which Jesus specifically *wills* to move instantaneously from one place to another and actually succeeds in doing so.

Let us now turn to the putative historical evidence we actually have for the resurrection hypothesis. This consists entirely of biblical traditions that come from the letters of Paul, the Gospels, and the Book of Acts. These documents report a number of appearances of what is alleged to be Jesus in his resurrection body: eleven appearances on earth (to Mary Magdalene, Peter, et al.) during the forty day period that began on the first Easter and one heavenly appearance (to Paul) approximately three years later.[17] Let us grant—but merely for the sake of argument—that the New Testament Easter traditions are entirely historical, down to the last detail.[18] Then we may state these traditions in one compendious proposition as follows:

(27) Jesus died and became alive again sometime between 30 and 33 CE. On eleven occasions, during the next forty days, he presented himself alive before various individuals and groups—doing such things as walking, teaching, eating, etc. He had no illness or injury (other than what he suffered in connection with his crucifixion) at any of these times. On two of them he moved instantaneously from place to place—vanishing from the house in Emmaus and appearing later in the Upper Room. On another occasion he walked through the closed doors into the Upper Room. Finally, at the end of his last appearance, he ascended from the Mount of Olives into a cloud waiting overhead. Sometime, about three years later, Jesus appeared on the road to Damascus to

> Saul of Tarsus and his traveling companions in the form of a heavenly light and voice/noise claiming to have undergone resurrection from the dead.

Details not explicitly stated in this proposition, e.g., that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary on their way from the empty tomb (Matt. 28:8–10), are nonetheless tacitly assumed.

Let us now consider, finally, what the New Testament Easter traditions, as stated in (27), are actually capable of establishing. Treating (27) as our evidence for the resurrection hypothesis, even for the sake of argument, is clearly going far beyond "the second mile." After all, it even treats the revivification hypothesis (1) as a fact(!). Nonetheless, even if we waive all critical doubt regarding the historical reliability of (27), it is clear that this "evidence" still cannot be used to establish universal generalizations (8) through (12)—either "from above" or "from below."

It is clear, first, that we cannot use (27) to establish universal generalizations (8) through (12) "from above." The problem here is that there are no *well-established* general hypotheses that link the putative evidence we have about Jesus in (27) with the dispositional properties of the resurrection body (e.g., the permanent inability to die) posited in universal generalizations (8) through (12). For example, we have no well-established generalizations about the properties of revivified individuals, e.g.:

> (24) Anyone who at a given time is executed for claiming to be the Son of God and then revivified in vindication of that claim is unable to be sick at any time thereafter.

because, clearly, we have no experience with revivified persons (especially those claiming to be the Son of God) upon which to base such generalizations. It may be objected that we *do* have eyewitness reports concerning such individuals, viz., those recorded in the biblical accounts of revivification ((2 Kings 4:32–35; 13:21; Matt. 9:25; 27:52–53; Luke 7:12–15; John 11:43–44; Acts 9:36–41; 20:9–10). However, these stories, in addition to being of dubious historical value, involve only cases of resuscitation. Thus, even if historical, they would actually tend to support the following generalization:

(28) Anyone who has been revivified at a given time is able to die, to be injured, etc., at any time thereafter.

and thus, ironically, lead us to the contraries of propositions (8) through (12)! And this is the situation quite generally: We lack the requisite experience necessary for establishing general hypotheses that would link the information we have about Jesus with the dispositional properties of the resurrection body.

It is also clear that we cannot establish propositions (8) through (12) "from below," by directly testing them against the putative evidence offered in (27). The problem here, simply, is that the appearances of the revivified Jesus adduced in (27) do not constitute an *adequate* sample upon which to base universal generalizations of such immense scope. This is evident, on the one hand, in the case of the earthly appearances of the revivified Jesus. These are very few (only eleven) in number, occurring within a very brief period of time (only forty days), and, worst of all, do not involve genuine tests of the dispositional properties of the resurrection body. Thus, Jesus is never exposed to objects that can injure (e.g., a mace), disease producing agents (e.g., *Plasmodium malariae*), or lethal substances (e.g., mustard gas). (This is hardly surprising, of course, since his followers would never dare commit such sacrilege as, e.g., setting Jesus' clothes on fire in order to see whether he would burn!) Furthermore, Jesus is only observed during a six week period in these appearances—making detection of the aging process impossible. Finally, in the Emmaus and first Upper Room appearances Jesus does not even will (at least overtly) to teleport. Nor, on the other hand, does the heavenly appearance to Paul on the road to Damascus add anything appreciable to our evidence. For all that was actually observed on this occasion was a blinding light—not the body of Jesus itself.[19] Hence, Paul was not in a position to determine whether Jesus could still be injured, killed, and so on. Moreover, there were no further appearances of the revivified Jesus.[20] Accordingly, we have no observations of the actual body of Jesus from the time of the ascension until the present. Thus we have no evidence that Jesus didn't catch a bad cold in 43 CE or that he didn't cut himself on a rock one hundred years later. We have no evidence that he didn't succumb to gangrene or a blow to the head in 503 CE or that he wasn't shriveled with old age in the year 1200 CE. Nor do we have evidence regarding the ability of Jesus to move instantaneously from place to place at

any of these times. Consequently, the incidents adduced in (27) can no more establish universal generalizations (8) through (12) than could parallel observations (e.g., made by the townspeople of Bethany) establish:

(29) Lazarus was transformed into a living supernatural body on the fourth day after his death by Jesus.

They perhaps offer (12) a scintilla of support—but that is all.

The upshot of this discussion, then, is this. In light of the kind of evidence required to establish universal generalizations either "from above" or "from below," the putative evidence we actually have from the New Testament Easter traditions (proposition [27]) is far too weak to establish the distinctive consequences of the resurrection hypothesis:

(8) Jesus is unable to be injured at any time after 33 CE.
(9) Jesus is unable to die at any time after 33 CE.
(10) Jesus is unable to age at any time after 33 CE.
(11) Jesus is unable to be sick at any time after 33 CE.
(12) Jesus is able to move at will instantaneously from place to place at any time after 33 CE.

However, since the resurrection hypothesis entails universal generalizations (8) through (12), it is necessary to establish these propositions in order to establish the resurrection hypothesis. Consequently, it must be concluded that the putative evidence afforded by the New Testament Easter traditions fails to establish the resurrection hypothesis. This conclusion, of course, applies a fortiori to the bona fide evidence we have for the resurrection hypothesis—what Habermas has called "the known historical facts" of the case—e.g., the basic empty tomb tradition (Mark 16:1–6,8) and the appearance list given by Paul (1 Cor. 15:3–8).[21]

I think there are two likely objections to my argument that the New Testament Easter traditions do not provide sufficient evidence to establish the resurrection hypothesis. First, and most obviously, it may be objected that the ability of the revivified Jesus (as granted in [27]) to appear/disappear and to pass through solid objects signifies a change in the nature of his body most congruent with the supposition that he could no longer be injured, die,

etc. The intuition here is that a body capable of teleportation and/or passage through solid matter must have undergone a remarkable change incommensurate with all forms of physical corruptibility. Accordingly, it may be argued that (27) *does* provide evidence at least for universal generalizations (8) through (11).

But this objection is without foundation. Upon closer examination, it proves to be an attempt to establish propositions (8) through (11) "from above" by appeal to (27) in conjunction with the following implicitly assumed generalization:

(30) Any revivified person who can move instantaneously from place to place or pass through solid objects at a given time is unable thereafter to be injured, to die, to age, or to be sick.

The problem, however, is that this generalization is just an *assumption* and thus incapable of providing the epistemic link required for the relevant items of (27) to confer evidence upon universal generalizations (8) through (11). On the one hand, (30) is not true on conceptual grounds, for there are numerous conceptually possible cases in which it is false, e.g., the case in which the resuscitated Lazarus is directly teleported by God out of the tomb.[22] Nor, on the other hand, is there any evidence for (30)—we have no instances of revivified individuals who can move instantaneously from place to place or pass through solid objects (other than the very case in question) and thus have no way of determining what such individuals are incapable of, e.g., dying, aging, and so forth. Moreover, there are at least some intuitive grounds for holding that (30) is actually false, since teleportation and passage through solid objects would surely seem to require the expenditure of tremendous amounts of energy—energy that would no longer be available for use by a revivified body to maintain itself in homeostasis over against physico-chemical equilibrium with its environment.[23] Consequently, the appeal to proposition (27) in conjunction with supposition (30), far from providing evidence for universal generalizations (8) through (11), merely pushes the problem of evidence one step further back.

A second natural objection to my argument that there is insufficient evidence to establish the resurrection hypothesis can be summarized as follows. The revivified Jesus (as supposed in [27]) was either a liar, himself deceived,

or else telling the truth regarding his resurrection. But, clearly, Jesus wasn't a liar—we know this already even from his earthly life. Nor could Jesus have been deceived about the fact of his resurrection. His ascension and later appearance in heavenly glory preclude this and show that he would have had to have known what had happened to him, for God would not allow an individual in such circumstances to be deceived. Consequently, the revivified Jesus must have been telling the truth about his resurrection, i.e., what he actually underwent was resurrection, not resuscitation.

This objection, like the first, is also an attempt to establish propositions (8) through (12) "from above" by appeal to the relevant items of (27) in conjunction with certain implicit generalizations—in this case:

(31) Revivified persons who have been great moral teachers are unable to lie.

(32) Revivified persons who have ascended and appeared in heavenly glory cannot be deceived regarding their species of revivification, i.e., whether they have undergone resuscitation or resurrection.

Once again, however, this objection will not withstand scrutiny. The problem here, as before, is that the generalizations presupposed in the objection are pure speculation and thus cannot furnish the necessary evidential connection between (27) and propositions (8) through (12). It is clear, in the first place, that neither (31) nor (32) can be shown to be true by appeal to conceptual considerations. For example, it is conceptually possible that a very powerful evil spirit (e.g., one of the Watchers of the pseudepigraphic Book of Enoch[24]) or a group of technologically advanced but unscrupulous aliens (e.g., the Talosians of *Star Trek*[25]) brought about the resuscitation, ascension, and glorious appearance of Jesus—either forcing him against his will to lie about the resurrection or else tricking him into believing that it had actually occurred by enthroning him, after his ascension, in a fake heaven as the "resurrected" Son of Man. This is conceptually possible, note, even on the *Christian* conception of God, according to which God is of such a nature as to permit the occurrence of major theological deception, e.g., false signs and wonders capable of misleading even the elect.[26] But that this is at least conceptually possible shows that (31) and (32) cannot be true on conceptual grounds.[27] Accordingly, if these generalizations are to be shown to be true at

all, it must be by appeal to experience. Unfortunately, however, we have no real empirical evidence for either of these generalizations, i.e., we have no instances (other than the assumed case in question) of great revivified moral teachers who have ascended from the earth and then appeared to others in blinding heavenly glory.[28] As a result, we have no way of determining whether such individuals are peerlessly honest or pathological liars or whether they are accurately informed or utterly deceived. There is simply no way to determine the probability of what God would allow/disallow in such cases. The upshot, accordingly, is that the claims of the revivified Jesus regarding his resurrection in (27) cannot furnish evidence for universal generalizations (8) through (12).

This brings us to the end of our discussion. We have considered the claim that there is sufficient historical evidence to establish the resurrection hypothesis, viz., the hypothesis that sometime, after his death, between 30 and 33 CE, Jesus was transformed into a living supernatural body permanently incapable of death, aging, etc. Upon careful examination, however, we have found that our only source of potential evidence, the New Testament Easter traditions, fall far short of providing the kind of information necessary for establishing the resurrection hypothesis—even on the assumption of their complete historical reliability (proposition [27]). This assumption, of course, is rightly dismissed in light of contemporary New Testament scholarship (particularly in the case of those traditions that recount the disappearance/appearance of the revivified Jesus [Luke 24:31,36], his walking through closed doors [John 20:19,26], and his ascension from the Mount of Olives [Acts 1:9]).[29] It has served, nonetheless, to dramatically highlight the ultimate point of this discussion, viz., that the tiny fraction of New Testament Easter traditions that comprises our bona fide historical evidence—the core empty tomb tradition (Mark 16:1–6,8) and the appearance list given by Paul (1 Cor. 15:3–8)—is woefully inadequate to establish a proposition as bold as the resurrection hypothesis.[30] It also serves to rebut the charge, so often leveled by apologists, that the reason critics find evidence wanting for the resurrection is because of overly zealous skepticism toward the New Testament Easter traditions coupled with the a priori rejection of the supernatural.[31] For the real problem, we have seen, is one of logic—not metaphysics. Things would be different, of course, if we had eyewitness reports of the revivified Jesus passing genuine tests of the dispositional properties of the resurrection body,

e.g., the statement of Peter and John that they saw Roman lances bouncing off the body of the revivified Jesus as he stormed the Praetorium to unseat Pilate and take his rightful place as Messiah. But, unfortunately, we do not. Consequently, apologists would do well to stop making exalted claims about establishing the resurrection and turn their attention instead to the revivification hypothesis. But there are serious logical problems here too that await future discussion.[32]

NOTES

For helpful criticisms and suggestions made in response to an earlier version of this paper, I would like to express my thanks to Dale Brant, Carlos Colombetti, William Lane Craig, Stephen T. Davis, and Nelson Pike.

1. See William Lane Craig, *Knowing the Truth about the Resurrection* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1988); *idem*, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus*, vol. 16, *Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellon Press, 1989); Gary R. Habermas, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980); Gary R. Habermas and Antony G. N. Flew, *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* ed. Terry L. Miethe (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1983); George Eldon Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1975); Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?" *Dialog* 4 (1965): 128–35, and *Jesus—God and Man*, 2nd ed., trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), pp. 88–106.

2. Although not entirely satisfactory, the English "supernatural body" is a much better rendering of the Greek phrase σωμα πνευματικόν than the quite misleading expression "spiritual body."

3. This is also the concept of those critical scholars writing on the resurrection of Jesus who do not necessarily hold that the historical evidence is sufficient to establish the resurrection hypothesis, e.g., Raymond E. Brown, Gerald O'Collins, Reginald H. Fuller, Pheme Perkins, and J. A. T. Robinson. See, for example, Raymond E. Brown, *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1973), p. 73:

> It is probably true that a great number of Christians who believe in the resurrection of Jesus have confused this resurrection with the resuscitation of a corpse. For instance, many see no difference between the risen Jesus and the people whom Jesus is reported to have restored to ordinary life during his ministry (Lazarus, the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Nain). This is a confusion because the NT evidence is lucidly clear that Jesus was *not* restored to ordinary life—his risen existence is glorious and eschatological, transported beyond the limitations of space

> and time; and he will not die again. . . . Perhaps we could insist on using "resuscitation" to describe the Gospel miracles by which Jesus restored men to natural life and on keeping "resurrection" to describe the unique eschatological event by which Jesus was elevated from the tomb to glory.

4. Craig, *Knowing*, p. 15.

5. Ibid., p. 127. Cf., for example, the parallel analysis of Harris: "the term 'resurrection' when it is applied to Christ . . . refers to the revival and metamorphosis of Jesus of Nazareth after his crucifixion and burial" (p. 58); "the Resurrection was not a resuscitation of the earthly Jesus merely to renewed physical life" (p. 56); and "the resurrection of Christ was unlike the 'raisings' mentioned in the gospels (Mark 5:22–24, 35–43; Luke 7:11–17; John 4:46–53; 11: 1–44) in that Jesus . . . rose in a glorified deathless state (Rom. 6:9)" (p. 57).

6. See the discussion of this point in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. "Resurrection," by J. A. T. Robinson. Note that throughout this article I am using the term 'revivification' in just that sense according to which all resuscitations and all resurrections are revivifications—but not vice versa. It is worth noting in this connection that at least for Paul, the verb εγείρω also applies only to revivification as transformation into a supernatural body. Thus Paul (Rom. 6:9) gives as the sole grounds of our knowledge that Jesus will never die again the reason that Jesus has been raised from the dead.

7. Craig, *Assessing*, p. 142; Craig, *Knowing*, p. 141; Harris, p. 121; Ladd, p. 115. Consider, for example, the observations made by Craig (*Knowing*, p. 104): "The resurrection body . . . is completely freed from the effects of sin . . . such as disease, death, and decay" and by Ladd (p. 114):

> The mortal body is perishable, dishonouring and weak; the resurrection body [is] . . . imperishable, glorious, and powerful . . . Who can imagine a body without weakness? or infection? or tiredness? or sickness? or death? This is a body utterly unknown to earthly, historical existence.

8. Craig, *Knowing*, p. 141; Harris, p. 121. Harris points out (p. 121) that the resurrection body is forever freed from the distressing infirmity of old age and observes in this connection (p. 123) that:

> Compared with the earthly and therefore transient character of the physical body, the spiritual [resurrection] body is permanently durable, transcending all the effects of time. Compared with earthly corporeality with its irreversible tendency to decay which finally issues in death, the heavenly embodiment is *indestructible*, incapable of deterioration or dissolution.

9. Craig, *Knowing*, p. 141; Harris, p. 121; Ladd, p. 115.

10. Craig, *Knowing*, p. 141; Craig, *Assessing*, p. 142; Harris, p. 121.

11. On this point Craig states: "According to the gospels, Jesus in his resurrection body

had the ability to appear and vanish at will, without regard to spatial distances" (*Assessing*, pp. 342–43); and: "In his resurrection body Jesus can materialize and dematerialize in and out of the physical universe" (*Assessing*, p. 346).

12. I am using the modal terms 'able' and 'unable' in connection with the phrases 'to die,' 'to age,' 'to be sick,' and 'to be injured' in just that sense according to which a thing is able/unable to die, age, be sick, or be injured only if it is *alive*. There is, of course, a trivial sense in which a corpse can be said to be unable to die, age, and be sick—simply because it is not a living thing. This is the sense in which any inanimate object, e.g., a rock, is unable to die, age, and be sick. Similarly, there is also a sense in which a corpse might be said to be able to be injured—because it can still be cut up, burned, etc. But neither of these accords with the above sense which is understood throughout this discussion.

13. Habermas and Flew, p. 29. Cf., for example, the claims made by Craig (*Knowing*, p. 127):

> The historical evidence supports the resurrection of Jesus. The empty tomb, the resurrection appearances, and the origin of the Christian faith can be explained only if Jesus actually rose from the dead. What are some implications of this fact? . . . First, the resurrection of Jesus was an act of God. Jesus' resurrection was not just a resuscitation of the mortal body to this earthly life, as with Lazarus, miraculous as that would be. Rather, Jesus rose to eternal life in a radically transformed body; that can be described as immortal, glorious, powerful, and supernatural. In this new mode of existence, he was not bound by the physical limitations of this universe, but possessed superhuman powers.

by Harris (p. 71):

> There are compelling historical evidences that encourage and validate the belief that, at the latest, some thirty-six hours after his death and burial, Jesus rose from the dead in a transformed bodily state.

and by Ladd (p. 140):

> The only hypothesis which adequately explains the "historical" facts, including the empty tomb, is that God actually raised the body of Jesus from the realm of mortality in the world of space and time to the invisible world of God.

14. Thomas Sherlock, *The Tryal of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus*, 8th ed. (London: 1736), p. 63.

15. Given our best current information, the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of the resurrection are respectively April 9, 30 CE and April 5, 33 CE.

16. That is, not on fire at these times.

17. This figure of eleven depends on how one tries to harmonize the various appearance traditions. But it makes no difference exactly how many appearances there were.

18. In actual practice we cannot assume the complete detailed historical accuracy of the New Testament Easter traditions since several of the components that make up these traditions contradict one another. I am simply *pretending* here that we can completely harmonize these traditions.

19. As Craig points out (*Assessing*, 75n35 and p. 333), all Paul actually saw on the road to Damascus was a light brighter than the sun.

20. What Stephen (Acts 7:55–56) and John of Patmos (Rev. 1:12–16) saw were mere visions—not genuine appearances of the revivified Jesus.

21. Habermas and Flew, pp. 25–26. Habermas lists "four core historical facts" as "accepted as knowable history by virtually all scholars" and a larger set of twelve facts as "accepted as knowable history by many scholars." Proposition (27), of course, includes both sets.

22. By conceptually possible here I mean (roughly) logically consistent with the definitions of our concepts.

23. One might well think that the diversion of energy necessary for teleportation or passage through solid objects would increase the aging process as well as susceptibility to injury, disease, and dying.

24. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. "Watcher," by Theodor H. Gaster.

25. *The Star Trek Encyclopedia*, s.v. "The Cage" and "Talosians."

26. Thus according to the Christian conception of God:

> False Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. (Matt. 24:24)

and:

> The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thess. 2:9–12)

On this conception, all of the billions of adherents of all of the world's religions (other than Christianity) are being deceived to the point of eternal damnation—by God's permission. Moreover, on the Christian conception God actually allows people to have *unveridical* experiences of being transported into "heaven" and being told things by "angels" which, unbeknownst to them, are diametrically opposed to the truth. Consider, for example, the Kabbalah mystic's experience of the Merkabah in the Seventh Hall of the Seventh Heaven and the near-death out-of-body experiences of the New Age movement wherein "revelations" are imparted that run contrary to the message of the gospel.

27. It might seem plausible to hold that the proposition that Jesus ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God entails universal generalizations (8) through (12) by

virtue of conceptual considerations. Note, however, that our "evidence" statement (27) says only that Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives into a cloud waiting overhead (Acts 1:9) and that he appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus in the form of a glorious heavenly light (Acts 9:3).

28. Nelson Pike has kindly pointed out to me in this connection that from the standpoint of traditional Christian theology there can be in principle no empirical evidence for (31) or (32) (or for [24] above), other than the assumed case in question, because according to this view these propositions apply uniquely to Jesus.

29. For excellent discussions of the critical problems concerning the New Testament Easter traditions, see Reginald H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980) and Craig, *Assessing*, parts 1 and 2.

30. Note that even if it is denied that universal generalizations (8) and (10) through (12) are consequences of the resurrection hypothesis (2), this cannot be denied regarding (9), since every use of the term "resurrection" in the New Testament—from the resurrection of Jesus to the resurrections of the just and of the unjust at the end of time—involves the permanent inability to die. But, as was shown in the main text above, proposition (27) provides no evidence for universal generalization (9). Thus, since (2) entails (9), it still cannot be denied that there is not sufficient evidence to establish (2).

31. Craig, for example (*Knowing*, p. 126), echoes the charge of Carl Braaten:

> Theologians who deny the resurrection have not done so on historical grounds; rather theology has been derouted by existentialism and historicism, which have a stranglehold on the formation of theological statements. This makes denials of Jesus' historical resurrection all the more irresponsible, because this conclusion has not been determined by the facts—which support the historicity of the resurrection—but by philosophical assumptions.

Cf. the parallel charges made in Gary R. Habermas, "Knowing that Jesus' Resurrection Occurred: A Response to Stephen Davis," *Faith and Philosophy* 2 (July 1985): 298–99; Harris, pp. 65–67; Ladd, pp. 12–13, 23–27; Pannenberg, "Did Jesus Really Rise?" p. 131.

32. It is my intention to discuss these problems in a future book to be coauthored with Carlos A. Colombetti.

2

THE RESURRECTION AS INITIALLY IMPROBABLE

MICHAEL MARTIN

BACKGROUND

Orthodox Christianity assumes that Jesus was crucified on the orders of Pontius Pilate and was then resurrected. Thus the Apostles' Creed proclaims that Jesus "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead." The Nicene Creed, in turn, maintains that Jesus "was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again according to Scriptures."[1]

Furthermore, the Resurrection has been considered by Christians to be a crucial element of Christian doctrine. Thus nearly two thousand years ago Paul proclaimed:

> If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God. . . If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile. (1 Cor. 15:14–17)

Many contemporary Christians seem to agree. Hugh Anderson, a New Testament scholar, writes:

> With all assurance we can say that, save for Easter, there would have been no New Testament letters written, no Gospels compiled, no prayers offered in Jesus' name, no Church. The Resurrection can scarcely be put on a par with certain other clauses in the Apostles' Creed—not if the New Testament is our guide . . . Easter, therefore, is no mere addendum to other factors in the story of Jesus Christ; it is constitutive for the community's faith and worship, its discipleship and mission to the world.[2]

Terry Miethe, a Christian philosopher at Oxford, has in turn maintained, "'Did Jesus rise from the dead?' is the most important question regarding the claims of the Christian faith."[3]

THE APPLICATION OF BAYES'S THEOREM

Is there any way to assess the probability of the Resurrection story? Given its significance for Christian thought the question is of crucial import. One useful approach to it is by means of Bayes's Theorem.

Let:

R = The Resurrection
E = Historical Evidence
T = Background Theories

Then on one version of Bayes's Theorem:

$$P(R/E\&T)$$

is equal to

$$\frac{P(R/T) \times P(E/R\&T)}{[P(R/T) \times P(E/R\&T)] + [P(\sim R/T) \times P(E/\sim R\&T)]}$$

Although this formula seems formidable it is easily explained. $P(R/E\&T)$ is the probability of the Resurrection relative to the historical evidence and our background theories. The historical evidence would include biblical evidence of the empty tomb, the postresurrection appearances of Jesus, and so on. The

background theories would include our general worldview—naturalism or supernaturalism as well as theories of perception, human nature, and the like.

In order for belief in the Resurrection to be rational P($R/E\&T$) must be greater than 0.5 or 50 percent. P(R/T) is the probability of the Resurrection relative to the background theories alone. This is sometimes called the initial or a priori probability. P($E/R\&T$) is the probability of historical evidence relative to the truth of the Resurrection and background theories. If R and T entailed E, then this probability would be 1. P($\sim R/T$) is the probability of the falsehood of the Resurrection relative to our background theories alone. P($E/\sim R\&T$) is the probability of E relative to the falsehood of the Resurrection and truth of the background theories. The falsehood of the Resurrection can be understood as a disjunction of all alternative explanations of the historical evidence, for example, fraud or myth.

The following points should be kept in mind about this formula. The lower the initial probability of the Resurrection P(R/T), the stronger the historical evidence must be to bring P($R/E\&T$) above 0.5 or 50 percent so that it would be worthy of rational belief. To put it in a different way, the lower the initial probability of the Resurrection P(R/T), the weaker the explanation of the historical evidence must be in terms of alternatives to the Resurrection to make the Resurrection rationally acceptable. As an example, suppose that the initial probability of the Resurrection is 0.1 or 10 percent. Let us suppose that the historical evidence is completely explained by the Resurrection combined with our background theories. That is, suppose P($E/R\&T$) = 1. Let us suppose that the historical evidence is not explained very well by the alternative theories. For example, suppose P($E/\sim R\&T$) = 0.2 or 20 percent. Even so the probability of the Resurrection relative to the historical evidence and our background theories is only about 0.36 or 36 percent—less than what would be needed to justify rational belief. In order for belief in the Resurrection to be rationally justified, the alternative theories would have to be poor explanations of the historical evidence, for example, P($E/\sim R\&T$) would have to have a value of around 10 percent or less.

On the other hand, if the initial probability of the Resurrection were even lower, say 0.01 or 1 percent, then the historical evidence would have to be extremely strong or, to put it another way, P($E/\sim R\&T$) would have to be quite small. For example, if P ($E/\sim R\&T$) = 0.01 or 1 percent, P($R/E\&T$) would be slightly above 0.5.

THE INITIAL IMPROBABILITY ARGUMENT

Given these considerations an argument against the existence of the Resurrection[4] can be constructed:

1. A miracle claim is initially improbable relative to our background knowledge.
2. If a claim is initially improbable relative to our background knowledge and the evidence for it is not strong, then it should be disbelieved.
3. The Resurrection of Jesus is a miracle claim.
4. The evidence for the Resurrection is not strong.

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5. Therefore, the Resurrection of Jesus should be disbelieved.

Let us call this the Initial Improbability Argument. Christians grant premise (3) and elsewhere I have defended premise (4).[5] Since Christian apologists might maintain that the argument fails because of the implausibility of premise (1), I will concentrate on this premise here.

Why should premise (1) be accepted? Traditionally a miracle is defined as a violation of a law of nature caused by the intervention of God. On a naturalistic worldview the initial probability of a miracle would be very small. On a dogmatic form of naturalism the background theories would entail the falsehood of the Resurrection. That is P(R/T)=0. But even on a more fallibilistic kind of naturalism, the initial probability of a miracle occurring would be extremely small.

However, it is important to see that the initial probability of the Resurrection would be small even if theism were true. But could we not expect God to intervene in the natural course of events and violate a natural law? We could not. If theism is true, then miracles in this intervention sense are *possible* since there is a supernatural being who *could* bring them about, but it does not follow that such miracles are more likely than not to occur.[6] Indeed, God would have good reason for never using miracles to achieve his purposes. For one thing, a violation of the laws of nature cannot be explained by science and, indeed, is an impediment to scientific understanding of the world. For another, great difficulties and controversies arise in identifying miracles. Whatever good effects miracles might have, then, they also impede, mislead,

and confuse. Since an all-powerful God would seem to be able to achieve his purposes in ways that do not have unfortunate effects, I conclude that there actually is reason to suppose that the existence of miracles is initially improbable even on a religious worldview.[7]

For the sake of argument suppose now that we assume with Christian apologist Richard Swinburne that miracles in the traditional sense are probable given God's existence. This assumption is perfectly compatible with the thesis that in any particular case a miracle is unlikely. Consider the following analogy: it is overwhelmingly probable that in a billion tosses of ten coins all ten coins will turn up heads at least once, but it is extremely unlikely that in any given case all ten coins will come up heads. In the same way, even if it is correct that, given the existence of God, some miracles are probable, it might be extremely unlikely that in any given case a miracle has occurred.

I say "might be" rather than "would be" because the occurrence of miracles, unlike the occurrence of ten heads in ten tosses of a coin, might not be rare. If miracles were as plentiful as dry days in the Sahara Desert, my analogy would be misleading. However, as far as religious believers are concerned, violations of the laws of nature are relatively rare. Even if ten thousand violations of natural laws were to occur every day, in relation to the total number of events that occur, their relative frequency would be very low. So given the background belief that miracles are rare—a belief that is held even by theists—it follows that a claim that a particular event is a miracle is initially improbable.

There is another sense of miracles, however, according to which God sets up the world so that an unusual event serves as a sign or message to human beings without violating a law of nature. This nonintervention sense of the term is meant to cover the following sort of case. Suppose that God arranges the world so that at a certain time in history the Red Sea parts because of a freak wind. Although no violation of a law of nature has occurred, this event conveys a message to religious believers; for example, that the Jews are God's chosen people and that God takes a special interest in them.

Now there is a way of interpreting a miracle claim in the nonintervention sense that makes a miracle extremely probable. If a theist maintains that *most* events which are governed by the laws of nature are arranged by God to serve as signs or to communicate messages to human beings, then miracle claims are initially probable. But this way of understanding miracles tends

to trivialize the notion. Nonintervention miraculous events are usually *contrasted* with the great majority of other events. For the typical believer in nonintervention miracles, most events are not arranged by God to convey some message. Thus, the initial probability of nonintervention miracles is low in terms of the background theories of the typical religious believer.

So far I have argued that miracle claims are initially improbable even on the assumption of theism. Indeed, relative to background beliefs that are shared by atheists and believers alike, for example, belief in the uniformity of nature, miracles are rare events. In addition, from a historical point of view, miracle claims, when understood as violations of laws of nature, have often been rejected by religious believers themselves. Even thoughtful believers in miracles admit that *most* miracle claims turn out to be bogus on examination, that in most cases of alleged miracles no law of nature has been violated and no action of God need be postulated. Even they say that relatively few claims ultimately withstand critical scrutiny.

For example, the Catholic Church has investigated thousands of claims of miracle cures at Lourdes, and it has rejected most of these as unproven.[8] Indeed, the number of officially designated miracles at Lourdes is less than seventy. Inductively, therefore, any new claim made at Lourdes is initially likely to be spurious. The same is true of other miracle claims: sophisticated religious believers consider most to be invalid. Thus, for example, Stephen T. Davis, a well-known Christian philosopher, apologist, and believer in miracles, argues "naturalistic explanations of phenomena ought to be preferred by rational people in the vast majority of cases."[9] His position is perfectly compatible with both the existence of miracles and the possibility of obtaining strong evidence for them. It does imply, however, that even on the assumption of theism, *initially* any given miracle claim is incredible and that to overcome this initial improbability strong evidence must be produced.

THE RESURRECTION AND GOD'S PURPOSE

So far I have shown that, in general, particular miracle claims are initially unlikely even in a theistic framework. Is the claim that Jesus arose from the dead an exception to this rule? Could God have had special purposes that made it necessary to cause the Resurrection? Could it be the case that

although any ordinary miracle claim is initially unlikely, the claim that the Resurrection occurred is initially likely? What special purpose of God would make the Resurrection initially likely?

According to Swinburne, it is likely that the God who created human beings would make it possible for them to atone for their sins and, consequently, it is likely that God's son would become incarnated as a human and would die in order to do this.[10] I have argued in detail elsewhere[11] that all the historically important theories of the atonement either fail to explain why God sacrificed his son for the salvation of sinners or else make the sacrifice seem arbitrary. But for the sake of the argument let us suppose that it is likely that God would sacrifice his son for the redemption of humanity. Still it would not follow that the incarnation and the resurrection are themselves likely. These are *particular* historical events occurring at *particular* times and places. However, God could have become incarnated and have died for sinners on an indefinite number of other occasions. There does not seem to be any a priori reason to suppose that he would have been incarnated and have died at one particular time and place rather than at many others. Consequently, even if *some* incarnation and resurrection or other is likely, there is no a priori reason to suppose that he would have become incarnated and have died as Jesus in first-century Palestine. Indeed, given the innumerable alternatives at God's disposal it would seem a priori unlikely that the incarnation and the resurrection would have taken place where and when they allegedly did.

Consider the following analogy which I adapt from one used by Swinburne. Suppose a mother has decided to pay her child's debts.[12] Suppose that this mother can do this in an enormous number of different ways and that there is a wide time span in which she can act. Suppose we know of no reason why the mother might use one of these ways rather than another or act at one time rather than another. Although it is likely, given the mother's decision, that she will pay her child's debt in some way at some future time, it is unlikely that she will settle her child's debt by a cash payment on July 8 of this year. Indeed, it is initially improbable that she will do so.

Similarly, given all of God's options, it is initially unlikely that his son would have become flesh and then have died in the way he is portrayed to have done in the scriptures. To use concrete figures: suppose conservatively that God had one hundred possible scenarios for redeeming sinners through the sacrifice of his son, only one of which is depicted in the New Testament

and none of which is more likely in terms of our background knowledge than any other. Then the initial probability of R relative to our background theories would be P(R/T) = 0.01 or 1 percent. Even if the Resurrection completely explains the historical evidence (P[$E/R\&T$] = 1) and alternative explanations of the historical evidence are very poor, for example, (P[$E/\sim R\&T$] = 0.02), the probability of the Resurrection relative to the evidence and our background theories would be only about 0.34 or 34 percent, considerably less than is needed for rational belief.

POSSIBLE REBUTTALS TO THE CLAIM OF LOW INITIAL PROBABILITIES[13]

A. THE PARTICULAR TIME AND PLACE ARGUMENT

I claim that the probability of the resurrection is initially low even if God exists since the resurrection occurs at some particular time and place. One possible rebuttal to my argument is that it would absurdly make the probability of any future event low.

In order to answer this charge it is important to notice that my argument is a special case of a more general and familiar point: the more specific a hypothesis, the less its initial probability, while the less specific a hypothesis, the more its initial probability. For example, it is more probable initially that a king will be drawn from a deck of cards than that the king of hearts will be drawn; it is more likely initially that a bird will be seen in my backyard than that a bluebird will be seen; it is more initially probable that I will receive a phone call at some time or other in the next year than that I will receive one on July 4 at 2 PM; it is more likely that I will receive a letter today from somewhere or other in the United States than that I will receive one from New York City.

Unspecific claims often but not always have a rather high initial probability and specific claims a very low initial probability. For example, given the background knowledge about my health, the unspecific claim that I will get a cold sometime in the next decade is very high while the claim that I will get a cold on October 5, 2005, is initially unlikely. On the other hand, given our background knowledge the unspecific claim that some human or other will

turn into a fish at sometime or other in the next hundred years is initially improbable even though the specific claim that Dan Rather will turn into a swordfish on July 4, 2003, is even more unlikely initially. In contrast, the specific claim that on July 4, 2001, in Phoenix, Arizona, it will be hot and sunny is initially high but not as high as the less specific claim that some day or other in the next century it will be hot and sunny somewhere in Arizona.

Seen in this light, my Particular Time and Place Argument should cause no puzzlement. Now let us suppose that relative to Christian supernaturalism's background beliefs, the following rather unspecific claim is initially probable:

(1) Some redeeming event or other has occurred or will occur at some time and place on Earth.

This statement is unspecific in just the sense considered above. The statement does not specify how God plans to redeem humanity. Resurrection is merely one among many ways of redemption. Moreover, if the redeeming event is a resurrection, the statement does not specify the form the resurrection would take and when or where it would take place. In addition, in contrast to a hot and sunny day in Arizona, this redeeming event is unique and singular: there is only one such event of this kind. In short, although (1) may be initially probable, both

(2) There was a redeeming resurrection of Jesus in first-century Palestine.

and the equivalent of (2)

(2′) The resurrection occurred.

are initially improbable.

Thus, my example of a particular hot and sunny day in Phoenix indicates that one cannot argue that the initial probability is low for virtually any future event. Moreover, an indefinite number of examples similar to my Phoenix one can be given.

B. THE FREE WILL OBJECTION

Another possible rebuttal to the thesis that the probability of the resurrection is initially low is based on the following example. Steven Davis argues:

> This is why the rarity of resurrections (which everyone will grant) cannot be equated with improbability. Suppose I want to buy a car, and I enter a lot where there are a thousand cars for sale, of which only one is red. Now what is the probability that I will buy the red one? Clearly, that probability is not just a function of the infrequency of red cars in the sample. This is obviously because my selection of a car might not be entirely random as to color. Indeed I might freely choose to buy the red car precisely because of its uniqueness.[14]

This car lot example attempts to show that since God's choice of the resurrection is free, the initial probability of the resurrection is not low. However, consider the initial probability of a person's free choice of the only red car in the lot of nonred cars from the point of view of onlookers who do not know this person's preference for red cars. The initial probability of choosing this car from a lot of thousands of cars is very low. Of course, if the onlookers knew the person's color preferences, this initial probability would change. By analogy, God's choice to enact some redeeming miracle or other is a free one. But, as far as supernaturalists are concerned, God has numerous options and any *particular* one such as the resurrection is initially improbable. Perhaps if Christians knew God's preferences, this would change. But they do not. They only believe that God wants to redeem humanity.

C. ANOTHER OBJECTION TO THE LOW INITIAL PROBABILITY CLAIM

Another possible objection to my argument that the initial probability of the resurrection is low is that I assume background beliefs shared by both naturalists and supernaturalists rather than ones shared only by Christian supernaturalists, for instance:

(5) God wants to redeem human beings.

However, allowing (5) as part of the background belief still makes

(2') The resurrection occurred.

initially improbable. Indeed, redemption can occur without any resurrection at all, let alone the resurrection of Jesus in first-century Palestine.

CONCLUSION

Bayes's Theorem indicates that if the initial probability of the resurrection is very low, the historical evidence must be extremely strong to make rational belief in the resurrection possible. In this paper I take it as a given that the historical evidence is not very strong and I show that the initial probability of the resurrection is very low. This thesis is not surprising given the assumption of naturalism. However, I show the initial probability is low even on the assumption of supernaturalism. First, there is good reason to expect God would not perform miracles. Second, even if some miracles could be expected, there is good reason to suppose they would be rare and thus a priori unlikely in any given case. Third, supposing God's purpose is to redeem humans, given the many alternative ways that this could have been achieved, it is a priori unlikely that he would have chosen to do this in the manner, time, and place depicted in scripture.

NOTES

1. The Athanasian Creed does not say that Jesus was crucified under Pilate but only that He "suffered for our salvation, descended into Hades, rose again on the third day."

2. Hugh Anderson, *Jesus and Christian Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 186–87.

3. Terry Miethe in *Did Jesus Rise From The Dead? The Resurrection Debate*, ed. Terry Miethe (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), p. xi.

4. Michael Martin, *The Case Against Christianity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), chap. 3; Michael Martin, "Why the Resurrection is Initially Improbable," *Philo* 1 (Spring–Summer 1998): 63–74; Michael Martin, "Reply to Davis," *Philo* 2 (Spring–Summer 1999): 62–76; Michael Martin, "Christianity and the Rationality of the Resurrection," *Philo* 3 (2000): 52–62.

5. See note 4.

6. Antony Flew makes a similar point when he says that "the defining characteristics of the theistic God preclude all possibilities of inferring without benefit of particular revelation, what a God might be reasonably be expected to do." Antony Flew, *God: A Critical Inquiry* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1984), p. 145.

7. Cf. Christine Overall, "Miracles as Evidence Against the Existence of God, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23 (1985): 347–53. See also Christine Overall, "Miracles and God: A Reply to A. H. Larmer," *Dialogue* 36 (1997): 741–52.

8. Michael Martin, *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1900), pp. 202–207.

9. Stephen T. Davis, *Risen Indeed* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmams, 1993), p. 13.

10. Richard Swinburne, *Revelation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 71–72.

11. Martin, *The Case Against Christianity*, appendix 2.

12. Swinburne, *Revelation*, p. 71.

13. Stephen T. Davis, "Is Belief in the Resurrection Rational? A Response to Michael Martin," *Philo* 2 (Spring–Summer 1999): 51–62; Steven T. Davis, "The Rationality of the Resurrection for Christians: A Rejoinder," *Philo* 3 (2000): 41–51.

14. Davis, "Is Belief in the Resurrection Rational?" p. 58.

3

WHY RESURRECT JESUS?

THEODORE M. DRANGE

According to Christian theology, the death of Jesus was supposed to be a great sacrifice that atoned for the sins of mankind. But what sort of death is it if Jesus comes back to life on earth in a bodily form shortly after dying? (And not only that, but he subsequently comes to assume a position of great power and glory in heaven!) Not much of a death at all, one might say. It would have seemed more like a real death if Jesus, or at least his body, had stayed dead. For example, the body might have been cremated and not ever revived. That would have been a greater sacrifice on God's part. So, the way Christian theology portrays the matter, there is an apparent inconsistency between the atonement and the resurrection. The atonement requires the death of Jesus to be genuine and to be a great sacrifice. But with the resurrection (and subsequent ascension to glory), the death of Jesus is shown not to be genuine and not to be a great sacrifice. Even if this inconsistency could somehow be overcome, just the appearance of it creates a kind of weakness. For Christian theology to endure such an inconsistency (whether it is merely apparent or not), the resurrection must play some very important role within the system. To try to understand what that role might be, I turn to the great Christian theologian Charles Hodge. He gave four reasons to regard the resurrection of Christ to be, as he put it, "the most important fact in the history of the world." I shall consider each of them.

I.

The first of Hodge's reasons is the following:

> (1) All of Christ's claims and the success of His work rest on the fact that He rose from the dead. If He rose, the gospel is true and He is the Son of God, equal with the Father, God manifest in the flesh, the Saviour of men, the Messiah predicted by the prophets, and the Prophet, Priest, and King of His people. If He rose, His sacrifice has been accepted as a satisfaction to divine justice, and His blood as a ransom for many.[1]

There is a mistake in reasoning here. Even if it were true that Christ's resurrection is a sufficient condition for all the factors listed by Hodge (the truth of the gospel, Christ being the Son of God, etc.), it does not follow that it is a necessary condition. Yet it would need to be a necessary condition in order for Christ's claims and the success of his work to *rest upon* the Resurrection. In effect, Hodge is initially claiming that the Resurrection is important because it is necessary for Christ's claims to be true and his work to succeed, but instead of showing how the Resurrection is necessary, he proceeds to maintain only that it is sufficient for the various factors given. This constitutes a great non sequitur.

Another objection is that the alleged sufficient-condition relationships do not hold. Hodge claims that "Christ rose from the dead" entails all of the following nine propositions:

(a) The gospel is true;
(b) Christ is the Son of God;
(c) Christ is equal with the Father;
(d) Christ is God manifest in the flesh;
(e) Christ is the Savior of men;
(f) Christ is the Messiah predicted by the prophets;
(g) Christ is the Prophet, Priest, and King of his people;
(h) Christ's sacrifice has been accepted as a satisfaction to divine justice; and
(i) Christ's blood has been accepted as a ransom for many.

But, in fact, it does not entail any of them. For each item in the list it is possible to devise a scenario in which it is false, even though Christ did indeed

rise from the dead. For example, (a) might be false because people will not be saved, even though Christ did come back to life after having died. His resurrection might have been produced by voodoo magic. Or it might have been produced naturalistically, say, through the work of highly advanced extraterrestrials. Similar scenarios could be devised for each item in the list. Thus, Hodge's initial premise, that the resurrection of Christ is sufficient for a great number of truths that are foundational to Christianity, not only fails to entail the conclusion that he tries to infer from it, but it is false as well. The resurrection is not a sufficient condition for any of the alleged truths.

A more charitable reading of Hodge's first point would be to interpret the list of relationships to be statements to the effect that the resurrection of Christ is a *necessary* condition for each of the nine items given. Instead of saying "If He rose, then the gospel is true," Hodge should have said "Only if He rose would the gospel be true," and so on for all the other items ("Only if He rose would he be the Son of God," and so on). If Hodge had put the matter that way, at least the list would have been relevant to the conclusion that he wished to draw: that "all of Christ's claims and the success of His work rest upon the fact that he rose from the dead." In other words, if Christ had *not* risen from the dead, then his claims would not have been true and his works would not have succeeded.

To take the resurrection of Christ as a *necessary* condition for each of the propositions (a)–(i), above, would be to reverse the claimed entailment. It would then be claimed that "Christ rose from the dead" is a logical consequence of each of the nine propositions. The question needs to be raised, then: is it a logical consequence of any of them? Or, viewing it in the opposite way, could any of the propositions still be true even if Christ had *not* risen from the dead? For example, in the case of (a), could the gospel still be true even if the Resurrection had not occurred? I shall consider each of them individually.

(a) Yes, the gospel could still have been true, since all that the gospel maintains is that Christ's atonement was successful, and, consequently, salvation has been made possible for humanity. It was the death of Christ, not his resurrection, that was supposed to have atoned for humanity's sins. And his death could indeed have occurred without the resurrection. Christ's body might have been cremated or in some other way destroyed, and the message regarding the possibility of salvation could have been communicated simply by scripture. Or it could have been communicated by skywriting or a thou-

sand other ways. There was no need whatever for the Resurrection to have occurred.

(b) It is the same with the proposition that Christ is the Son of God. The Resurrection was in no way necessary for that. Christ could still have been and could still be the Son of God even if his earthly body had been destroyed. It is the spirit and/or soul that is supposed to live on. Jesus commended his spirit to his father (Luke 23:46) and it is his spirit and/or soul that could play the divine role of "Son," just as it was presumably his spirit and/or soul that lived and was the Son of God prior to his advent on earth.

(c) Similar considerations could be raised in connection with the proposition that Christ is equal with the Father. For that to be true, there was no need for Christ's earthly body to have been in any way preserved. If it had been, instead, permanently destroyed, that would not have any relevance to Christ's relationship with the Father, for both of them are supposed to be essentially spiritual beings.

(d) The fourth proposition is that Christ is God manifest in the flesh. For that to be true, is it necessary that the manifestation in the flesh be permanent? Clearly not. Christ accomplished his work on earth, declaring "It is finished" (John 19:30). Even if his earthly body were subsequently destroyed, it could still be true that Christ was God manifest in the flesh during the time that he lived on earth.

(e) As for "Christ is the Savior of men," it was the death of Christ that was supposed to have made that true. The subsequent resurrection had nothing to do with it. To think otherwise is to confuse two quite distinct principles of Christian theology: the Atonement and the Resurrection. They are quite independent of each other, both logically and conceptually.

(f) As for "Christ is the Messiah predicted by the prophets," the question is whether the OT prophets ever predicted that their Messiah would be bodily resurrected from the dead. The only verse put forward as a candidate for such prophecy is Psalms 16:10, which reads in the King James Version (KJV): "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Some Christians would follow Acts 2:24–36 and say that "Holy One" here refers to the Jews' Messiah and so this is a messianic prophecy fulfilled by Christ's resurrection. However, that won't work, since the KJV translation is inaccurate. Almost all modern translations instead render the verse as in the New American Bible (NAB): "For you will

not abandon me to Sheol, nor let your faithful servant see the pit." There is apparently no indication in the original Hebrew that any reference is being made to the Jews' Messiah or that the verse has anything to do with a bodily resurrection. The idea that the Messiah would die and then come back to life was totally foreign to Judaic theology. So, there is simply no such messianic prophecy.[2] Thus, there is no need for Christ to have been resurrected in order for him to have been the Messiah predicted by the prophets.

(g) How about "Christ is the Prophet, Priest, and King of His people"? Could *that* be true if Christ had never been resurrected? I see no reason why not. All the prophets, priests, and kings who ever lived on our planet were ordinary human beings who died and then remained dead. Even if Christ was not an ordinary human being, there is no conceptual necessity in him being resurrected in order for him to play the three given roles.

(h) Now consider the proposition "Christ's sacrifice has been accepted as a satisfaction to divine justice." Some Christians might claim that there was a divine decree to the effect that the Resurrection was God's way of certifying that the Atonement was successful. So, if Christ had never been resurrected, then mankind would have no way of knowing that its sins had been atoned for by means of Christ's sacrificial death. But surely that is not so. As indicated in (a), above, the message regarding the possibility of salvation could have been communicated simply by scripture or in a thousand other ways. There was no need whatever for the Resurrection to have occurred. The matter is similar with regard to the message of the Atonement (that Christ's sacrifice has been accepted as a satisfaction to divine justice): it could have been communicated simply by scripture or in a thousand other ways. The Resurrection was unnecessary.

(i) The last proposition in the list is "Christ's blood has been accepted as a ransom for many." This one is very similar to (h). There was no need for God to resurrect Christ in order for him to accept Christ's blood as a ransom. The Atonement could have gone through quite well even if the earthly body of Christ had been permanently destroyed.

My conclusion here is that, simply by appeal to conceptual considerations, all nine propositions could still be true even if Christ had never been resurrected. The Resurrection was not necessary for any of them. Hence, for Hodge to proclaim that "all of Christ's claims and the success of His work rest upon the fact that he rose from the dead" is inaccurate and misguided. So,

Hodge's first reason for declaring the Resurrection to be the most important of all facts is a complete failure, for the thinking involved in it is erroneous.

II.

Hodge's second reason is quite brief. He says:

> (2) On His resurrection depended the mission of the Spirit, without which Christ's work would have been in vain.[3]

There are two main questions here: What is "the mission of the [Holy] Spirit"? And did/does that mission depend on the resurrection of Christ? Hodge describes the mission of the Holy Spirit in various parts of his book. He says that it was the mission of the Spirit to:

- be the source of all life and all intellectual life,[4]
- be the revealer of all divine truth,[5]
- inspire the biblical authors,[6]
- lead God's people into a knowledge of revealed truth,[7]
- influence people toward faith, repentance, and holy living, enforcing the truth on their hearts, causing religious experiences within them, thereby creating morality and order in the world,[8]
- regenerate the souls of the elect, providing them with saving faith, and then dwelling within them, being their teacher,[9]
- make the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper) effective,[10] and
- call men to office in the Church.[11]

Despite Hodge's statement (2), I see nothing in this list which could not be accomplished even if Christ's body had been permanently destroyed. There is no mention of the Resurrection in any of Hodge's descriptions of the work of the Holy Spirit in his book, so it is unclear why Hodge would make statement (2), i.e., the claim that that work depended on the Resurrection. It seems to be a quite empty pronouncement.

Hodge did say that the Holy Spirit "fashioned the body and endued the soul of Christ."[12] Could *that* special work of the Spirit somehow depend on

or entail the Resurrection? For example, was Christ's earthly body made of some especially tough material, so that it could not possibly be destroyed? Such a notion does not make much sense to me, nor do I see any scriptural support for it. Nor did Hodge himself make any such suggestion regarding Christ's body, so it seems unlikely that it was the basis of his pronouncement regarding the connection between the resurrection of Christ and the mission of the Holy Spirit. In the end, I am not able to find any support whatever for that pronouncement.

III.

Hodge's third reason for declaring the Resurrection to be the most important of all facts is given as follows:

> (3) As Christ died as the head and representative of His people, His resurrection secures and illustrates theirs. As He lives, they shall live also. If He had remained under the power of death, there would be no source of spiritual life to men, for He is the vine and we are the branches. If the vine be dead, the branches must be dead also.[13]

This raises two questions:

Q1: Must the afterlife involve a bodily resurrection?

Q2: If so, then could people still have a bodily resurrection even if Christ's body was not resurrected in the way that it was, shortly after his death?

Hodge's point (3) seems to imply a "yes" answer to Q1 and a "no" answer to Q2. But he does not defend either of those answers. I see no reason to give a negative answer to Q2. Christ's body could have been destroyed and he could still have had a bodily resurrection in the distant future (perhaps at the time of the Second Coming). All of that could have been made clear in scripture and in other ways as well (e.g., skywriting). In fact, presumably Christ's mode of resurrection would have been still more like that of his followers if it had not occurred shortly after his death, but centuries later. Hodge says that Christ's resurrection "illustrates" that of his people, and "as He lives,

they shall live also." But that is not so, for Christ's body was not destroyed, whereas the bodies of his people will be destroyed (either by cremation or by decomposition). It would be reasonable for people to say, "I understand how someone can come back to life again if his body wasn't destroyed, but I do not understand how a resurrection can occur after a body has been destroyed." Elsewhere, I argue that the very concept of an afterlife that follows the total destruction of a body is incoherent.[14] But even if such a resurrection were conceivable, and even if that is indeed the sort that people in general are supposed to have, it would make sense for Christ to have *that* sort as well. In other words, it would have been better for Christ's body to have been destroyed and then have a resurrection long afterward, in order to show that that mode of resurrection is indeed possible. At any rate, assuming that resurrections following the destruction of the body are possible, certainly everyone, including Christ, could have had *that* sort, which supports an affirmative answer to Q2.

It should also be pointed out that, even if Christ's body were destroyed and never resurrected, there is no reason the bodies of his followers could not be resurrected anyway. Christ is supposed to be a divine being and need not depend on the life of the body in the way that mere humans do. It would have been perfectly possible for Christ's mode of life after death to differ significantly from that of mere humans. This is still a further reason which could be used to attack and refute a "no" answer to Q2.

However, all that is moot if Q1 were to be answered negatively, for in that case Q2 would not even arise. Must life after death involve a revival of the original body? Many Christians believe that it does not. They believe that there is (or at least could be) a disembodied afterlife, or, alternatively, that God (being omnipotent and omniscient) could create a new body for the person who enters the afterlife. So long as it's the same soul, it's the same person. Revival of the original body is unnecessary. Under that way of thinking, Christ could have gone on to an afterlife even if his original body had been permanently destroyed. He could have lived on as a soul and/or as a spirit, or, alternatively, he could have received a new body. And the same could be true of everyone else.

Hodge himself expresses belief in what he calls "the intermediate state," which is a conscious, disembodied state of the soul that exists or obtains between the death of the body and the resurrection of the body. He puts forth

biblical evidence that there is such a state.[15] But if there is such a state, then why couldn't the entire afterlife consist in it? What need is there for a physical body at all if the person can be conscious and remain who he/she is without a body? Hodge does not address such questions. It seems to me that the very doctrine of an intermediate state calls for a negative answer to Q1, which would, in turn, upset Hodge's third reason for regarding the Resurrection to be important.

Hodge's idea of the resurrection becomes mighty peculiar when it is coupled with the doctrine of the intermediate state. According to Hodge, at the moment of death, people remain conscious and are transported in a disembodied state to heaven or to hell. They wait around there until the time of the general resurrection when they come to be reunited with their old original bodies. (The old bodies are improved in various ways and are made "incorruptible," but they are still the old physical bodies, notwithstanding.) Then the people in those bodies are transported back to heaven or hell, where they had been during the intermediate state. All of that is given biblical support.[16] It is left unexplained whether the resurrected people in that place get to do different things from the ones who exist or existed there without any bodies. It is also left unexplained whether there is any communication (or any sort of overlap) between disembodied people before their resurrection and people who have just recently been resurrected, or even how they all could be in "the same place," seeing as some are physical beings and others are nonphysical beings. Whether such notions are even coherent or intelligible becomes highly doubtful. In any case, it is clear that a strong case could be made for answering Q1 negatively, which undermines Hodge's third reason for regarding the Resurrection to be all-important.

IV

Hodge's fourth reason is expressed as follows:

> (4) If Christ did not rise, the whole scheme of redemption is a failure, and all the predictions and anticipations of its glorious results for time and for eternity are proved to be chimeras. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20). . . . The

> kingdom of darkness has been overthrown. Satan has fallen like lightning from heaven, and the triumph of truth over error, of good over evil, of happiness over misery, is forever secured.[17]

I do not see anything here that was not already covered in the first reason. Part of Christ's work was the Atonement, which was the basis of "the whole scheme of redemption," and, as shown previously, the Atonement could very well have occurred without the Resurrection. It follows that the claim above, "if Christ did not rise, the whole scheme of redemption is a failure," is simply erroneous. There is no such connection within Christian theology. Furthermore, the references to overthrowing the kingdom of darkness, the falling of Satan, and the triumph of truth, good, and happiness, are all misplaced. It was the Atonement, not the Resurrection, which accomplished all those great deeds.

It might be objected that Hodge's fourth reason is more forceful than the previous three because it is expressed by Saint Paul in scripture. Paul says, "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17). The problem here is that no support is given for Paul's claim. Suppose there had been no resurrection and Christ's body had been permanently destroyed. Why should his followers still be "in their sins"? There is no answer, since, as shown above, the Atonement could very well have gone through even if the Resurrection had never taken place. If the Atonement had gone through, then Christ's followers would *not* still be "in their sins." The assertion by Paul is simply mere assertion, without any theological backing. If there had been some other parts of scripture maintaining a connection between the Resurrection and the success of the Atonement (especially aside from Paul's writings), that would have had some significance. But there isn't any such, which indicates that the alleged connection just isn't there. Thus, the fact that Hodge's fourth reason finds some expression in the Bible does not provide it with enough support, nor does it point to any line of defense against the strong objections to it. It turns out, in the end, that none of Hodge's four reasons for regarding the resurrection of Christ to be an important event is defensible.

V.

Hodge did not elaborate on the point, but it might be maintained that the importance of the Resurrection lay in what it showed to mankind. It showed both: (1) that an afterlife is possible, and (2) that Jesus of Nazareth was not only someone quite special, but probably who he claimed to be (the "son of God"), and so the gospel message that he preached is probably true. It is not that these facts could not have been revealed in any other way (indeed they could have), but rather, that God chose the Resurrection as his way of revealing the given facts to mankind. As Jesus himself is supposed to have said:

> A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matt. 12:39–40, NIV)

There is some controversy about the matter, but I take the sign here ("three days and three nights in the heart of the earth") to be a reference to Jesus coming back to life again. That is, it is not that he will be in the earth but that he will be in there only a short time and then emerge alive again. The idea here is that it is because it was such a great miracle that the Resurrection had (and has) the enormous significance that Hodge attributed to it.

Of course, the biblical passage about Jonah could be criticized.[18] But, quite beyond that, both claims above, involving (1) and (2), might be challenged. Did the resurrection of Jesus show that an afterlife is possible? Clearly not. As pointed out in section III, above, all it showed was that a body that had not undergone decay might be revived. That simply does not apply to the usual situation of people who die and whose bodies are then destroyed (either by cremation or decomposition). It remains hard to comprehend how anyone could have a bodily resurrection after his/her body has been obliterated. The way Jesus is supposed to have come back to life is totally irrelevant to *that* situation. Furthermore, billions of people through the centuries lived their entire lives on earth without ever coming to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was resurrected from the dead. So, even if the Resurrection did occur, it did not show anything to mankind in general. Not even the Jews, who were supposed to be God's chosen people, accepted the claim

of the Resurrection (which in itself is quite remarkable). A group of them, the Sadducees, in fact did not even believe in an afterlife. And millions of people today deny the possibility of an afterlife. Hence, the claim involving (1) can be refuted.

Similarly, with the second claim, that the Resurrection showed something to mankind about Jesus of Nazareth, that one, too, is refuted by the fact that billions of people have had no awareness of the event. Even first-century Jews apparently had no awareness of it. One would think that an omnipotent deity would have done a better job of advertising (or "marketing") the Resurrection to mankind (and especially to his own chosen people) if indeed that had been his aim. At the very least, the resurrected Jesus would not have appeared only to his followers, but also to thousands of other people, thereby making what happened into a genuine historical occurrence. But that did not happen. Thus, it seems not to have been God's aim to have the Resurrection show something to mankind, despite the biblical passage regarding "the sign of Jonah." Grave doubt is cast, not only on the idea that the Resurrection showed to mankind something about Jesus of Nazareth, but also on the idea that God had intended that it should. Furthermore, even if it were widely known that Jesus of Nazareth was resurrected from the dead, that in itself does not imply that his alleged message is true. The resurrection could have been accomplished through some sort of magic or superscience. To infer from it that everything that Jesus is supposed to have said is true would be quite a leap of logic.

To summarize my result, I would say that Hodge's reasons for regarding the Resurrection to be an important event are all failures. Christ's claims and deeds during his life, the work of the Holy Spirit, the way the afterlife operates, the whole scheme of redemption: none of these things depended (or depend) upon the resurrection of Christ. So far as Christian theology is concerned, all of them could go on quite well without it (i.e., even if the body of Jesus had been permanently destroyed). Not even the words of Paul suffice to demonstrate the connection that is claimed. And as for the notion that the Resurrection served the important purpose of showing some important truths to mankind, that too is a failure, since: (1) in truth, most of mankind is unaware of the alleged resurrection, and (2) the propositions that are supposed to have been shown by the resurrection of Christ do not actually follow from it, there being a leap of logic in each case. I conclude that our title ques-

tion, "Why Resurrect Jesus?" does not have any reasonable answer within Christian theology. Instead of being essential to the overall system, the Resurrection may very well have been a kind of afterthought on the part of the biblical authors.

NOTES

1. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (1872), abridged ed., with a preface by Edwin N. Gross (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), p. 415.

2. It is interesting that in the NAB, the relevant part of Psalms 16:10 is rendered as "nor let your faithful servant see the pit," whereas the relevant part of Acts 2:27, which is supposed to be a translation of the Psalms verse into Greek, is rendered as "nor will you suffer your holy one to see corruption." In effect, the NAB is certifying that the author of Acts mistranslated the Psalms verse and is therefore in error regarding its character (claimed in verse 31) as a messianic prophecy of the Resurrection.

3. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, p. 415.

4. Ibid., p. 190.

5. Ibid., p. 191.

6. Ibid., pp. 81–83, 191.

7. Ibid., pp. 68, 95, 468.

8. Ibid., pp. 87, 192, 426–27.

9. Ibid., pp. 68, 192, 333.

10. Ibid., p. 482.

11. Ibid., p. 192.

12. Ibid., p. 191.

13. Ibid., p. 416.

14. Theodore M. Drange, *Nonbelief & Evil* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998), 364–77.

15. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 509–13.

16. Ibid., pp. 515–21.

17. Ibid., p. 416.

18. From Friday to Sunday is just two nights, not three. Also, Jesus was supposed to have performed many other miracles, not just the Resurrection, so his claim that no other miraculous sign would be provided was incorrect.

4

APOCRYPHAL APPARITIONS:

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3–11 AS A POST-PAULINE INTERPOLATION

ROBERT M. PRICE

Concerning the pericope 1 Corinthians 15:3–11, A. M. Hunter says, "Of all the survivals of pre-Pauline Christianity in the Pauline corpus, this is unquestionably the most precious. It is our pearl of great price."[1] His sentiment is widely shared, not least by those who see the passage as crucial for Christian apologetics, but also by those who at least feel that here we have a window, opened a crack, into the earliest days of Christian belief. In the present article I will be arguing that this pericope presents us instead with a piece of later, post-Pauline Christianity. Whether it thus loses some of its pearly sheen will lie in the eye of the beholder (cf. Gos. Phil. 62:17–22).

THE LEGITIMACY OF THE SUGGESTION

Recent articles have tried to establish ground rules for scholarly theorizing that would rule out arguments such as mine from the start. Two of these prescriptions against heretics are Frederik W. Wisse, "Textual Limits to Redactional Theory in the Pauline Corpus" and Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians."[2] These scholars seem to speak for the majority when they maintain that, short of definitive manuscript evidence, no sugges-

tion of an interpolation in the Pauline Epistles need be taken seriously. The texts as they stand are to be judged "innocent until proven guilty,"[3] which in the nature of the case, can never happen. Otherwise, if we had to take seriously interpolation or redaction theories based on internal evidence alone, "the result [would be] a state of uncertainty and diversity of scholarly opinion. Historians and interpreters [in such a case] can no longer be sure whether a text or parts of it represent the views of the author or someone else."[4] The game would be rendered very difficult to play.

I see in such warnings essentially a theological apologetic on behalf of a new Textus Receptus, an apologetic not unlike that offered by fundamentalists on behalf of the Byzantine text underlying the King James Version. Just as the dogmatic theology of the latter group was predicated on particular readings in the Byzantine/King James text and thus required its originality and integrity, so does the "Biblical Theology" of today's Magisterium of consensus scholarship require the apostolic originality of today's Nestle-Aland/UBS text. Herein, perhaps, lies the deeper reason for the tenacious unwillingness of such scholars to consider seriously the possibility of extensive or significant interpolations (or, indeed, any at all).

The issue resolves itself into theological canon-polemics. If the integrity of the "canonical" scholarly text proves dubious in the manner feared by Wisse, the whole text will be seen to slide from the Eusebian category of "acknowledged" texts to that of the "disputed." That is the danger, not that a few particular texts will pass all the way into the "spurious" category and be rendered off limits like the long ending of Mark, but that wherever he steps, the New Testament theological exegete will find himself amid a marshy textual bog. The former would actually be preferable to Wisse, since whatever remained could still be considered terra firma. And thus the apologetical strategy is to disallow any argument that cannot fully prove the secondary character of a piece of text. Mere probability results in the dreaded anxiety of uncertainty, so mere probabilities are no good. If we cannot prove the text secondary, we are supposedly entitled to go on regarding it as certainly authentic, "innocent until proven guilty." God forbid the scholarly guild should end up with Winsome Munro's seeming agnosticism:

> Until such time as the entire epistolary corpus is examined, not merely for isolated interpolations, but to determine its redactional history, most his-

> torical, sociological, and theological constructions on the basis of the text as it stands should probably be accepted only tentatively and provisionally, if at all.[5]

William O. Walker Jr. has suggested that, contrary to those opinions just reviewed, "in dealing with any particular letter in the corpus, the burden of proof rests with any argument that the corpus or, indeed any particular letter within the corpus . . . contains no interpolations."[6] Among the reasons advanced by Walker is the fact that

> the surviving text of the Pauline letters is the text promoted by the historical winners in the theological and ecclesiastical struggles of the second and third centuries. . . . In short, it appears likely that the emerging Catholic leadership in the churches 'standardized' the text of the Pauline corpus in the light of 'orthodox' views and practices, suppressing and even destroying all deviant texts and manuscripts. Thus it is that we have no manuscripts dating from earlier than the third century; thus it is that all of the extant manuscripts are remarkably similar in most of their significant features; and thus it is that the manuscript evidence can tell us nothing about the state of the Pauline literature prior to the third century.[7]

Wisse seems to think it unremarkable that all textual evidence before the third century has mysteriously vanished. But according to Walker, the absence of the crucial textual evidence is no mystery at all. It was a silence created expressly to speak eloquently the apologetics of Wisse and his brethren. Today's apologists for the new Textus Receptus are simply continuing the canon polemics of those who standardized/censored the texts in the first place. But, as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza says in a different context, we must learn to read the silences and hear the echoes of the silenced voices.[8] And that is what Walker and previous interpolation theorists have learned to do. The only evidence remaining as to a possible earlier state of the text is internal evidence, namely aporias, contradictions, stylistic irregularities, anachronisms, and redactional seams. And this is precisely the kind of thing our apologists scorn. As we might expect from an apologetical agenda, the tactic of harmonization of "apparent contradictions" is crucial to their enterprise. Consensus scholarship is no less enamored of the tool than the fundamentalist harmonists of whom their "maximal conservatism" is so reminis-

cent.[9] Wisse is forthright: the judicious exegete must make sense of the extant text at all costs. "Designating a passage in a text as a redactional interpolation can be at best only a last resort and an admission of one's inability to account for the data in any other way."[10] In other words, any clever connect-the-dots solution is preferable to admitting that the text in question is an interpolation. If "saving the appearances" is the criterion for a good theory, then we will not be long in joining Harold Lindsell in ascribing six denials to Peter.[11]

One of the favorite harmonizations used by scholars is the convenient notion that when Paul sounds suddenly and suspiciously Gnostic, for example, it is still Paul, but he is using the terminology of his opponents against them.[12] This would seem to be an odd, muddying strategy. But it was no strategy of the apostle Paul, only of our apologists. It commends itself to many, including Murphy-O'Connor: "If Paul, with tongue in cheek, is merely appropriating the formulae of his adversaries, there are no contradictions in substance."[13] Note the talk, familiar from fundamentalist inerrancy apologetics, of merely apparent contradictions. It is implied when Murphy-O'Connor is satisfied with "no contradictions in substance," "no real contradiction."[14]

Wisse even repeats the circularity of apologist C. S. Lewis's argument in the latter's "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism." Lewis dismisses historical-critical reconstructions of the historical Jesus, for example, since they are merely a chain of weak links: "[I]f, in a complex reconstruction, you go on . . . super-inducing hypothesis on hypothesis, you will in the end get a complex, in which, though each hypothesis by itself has in a sense a high probability, the whole has almost none."[15] But, we must ask, how is the orthodox apologist's edifice of apologetical bricks any sturdier? The merely probabilistic character of the critics' position is evident to him; that of his own is not.

And so with Wisse: "since the burden of proof rests on the arguments for redactional interference, the benefit of the doubt rightfully should go to the integrity of the text. If the case of the prosecution is not able to overcome serious doubts, then the text deserves to be acquitted."[16] Again, "This lack of certainty is sometimes obscured by scholars who wishfully refer to certain redactional theories as if they were facts."[17] And yet Wisse seems willing to consider harmonizations as facts, as if they themselves were not just as debatable as the interpolation hypotheses he despises. Because the critical argu-

ment is merely probabilistic and not certain, notwithstanding the similar vulnerability of his own preferred reconstructions (for that is what every harmonization is), Wisse feels as entitled as Lewis did simply to assume the case is closed.

The whole judicial verdict analogy is inappropriate to Wisse's argument anyway. In the one case, we have two choices, to put a man in jail or not. In the other, we have three choices: certainty of an authentic text, certainty of an inauthentic text, and uncertainty. A suggestive argument that nonetheless remains inconclusive should cause us to return to the third verdict, but Wisse will not consider it. The logical implication would seem to be textual agnosticism, but Wisse prefers textual fideism instead.

Though Walker and Munro are both willing to set some high hurdles for a proposed interpolation-exegesis to jump,[18] they are not nearly so high as the walls erected by Wisse: one must show manuscript support from that period from which none of any kind survives.[19] And here we are reminded of another inerrantist apologist, Benjamin B. Warfield, who set up a gauntlet he dared any proposed biblical error to run. Any alleged error in scripture must be shown to have occurred in the original autographs, which, luckily, are no longer available.[20] Warfield sought to safeguard the factual inerrancy of the text, while today's consensus scholars want to safeguard the integrity of the text, but the basic strategy is the same: like Warfield, Wisse, and Murphy-O'Connor have erected a hedge around the Torah.[21]

Murphy-O'Connor rejoices at any exegesis "liberating us from speculative interpretations, some with far reaching consequences regarding the authority of Scripture."[22] Here is the heart of the apologetical agenda, but with genuine criticism it has nothing in common. And thus we proceed with our inquiry.

VERSUS GALATIANS

The phrase "in which terms we preached to you the gospel" in 1 Corinthians 15:1 must be remembered in what follows. The list of appearances is not simply some interesting or important lore Paul passed down somewhere along the line during his association with the Corinthians. This is ostensibly the Pauline gospel itself, the Pauline preaching in Corinth. "Behind the

word 'gospel' in St. Paul we cannot assume a formula, but only the very preaching of salvation" (Dibelius).[23]

Again, verse 2 makes clear that what follows is not just a helpful piece of apologetics but rather the saving message itself. The phrases "if you hold it fast" and "unless you believed in vain" are not antithetical parallels. Rather, the latter means "unless this gospel is false," as the subsequent argument (verses 14, 17) shows.

The pair of words in verse 3a, "received/delivered" (παραλαμβάνειν/παραδίδομαι) is, as has often been pointed out, technical language for the handing on of rabbinical tradition.[24] That Paul should have delivered the following tradition poses little problem; but that he had first been the recipient of it from earlier tradents creates, I judge, a problem insurmountable for Pauline authorship. Let us not seek to avoid facing the force of the contradiction between the notion of Paul's receiving the gospel he preached from earlier tradents and the protestation in Galatians 1:1, 11–12 that "I did not receive it from man."[25] If the historical Paul is speaking in either passage, he is not speaking in both.

Some might attempt to reconcile the two traditions by the suggestion that, though Paul was already engaged in preaching his gospel for three years, it was on his visit to Cephas in Jerusalem that he received the particular piece of tradition reproduced in verses 3ff. But this will not do. These verses are presented as the very terms in which he preaches the gospel. The writer of 1 Corinthians 15:1–2ff never had a thought of a period of Pauline gospel preaching prior to instruction by his predecessors. Gordon Fee claims there is no real difficulty here, as all Paul intends in his Galatian "declaration of independence" is that he received his commission to preach freedom from the Torah among the Gentiles directly from Christ, not from men,[26] but is this all "the gospel which was preached by me" (Gal. 1:11) denotes? The question remains: if Paul had to wait some three years to receive the bare essentials of the death and resurrection of Jesus from the Jerusalem leaders, what had he been preaching in the meantime?

Here it is well to recall the cogent question aimed by John Howard Schütz at Gerhardsson's attempt at harmonization. Gerhardsson had proposed that Paul might have received the bare bones of the kerygma directly from the Risen Lord, as in Galatians 1:11, and had later received supplementary didache, such as that in 1 Corinthians 15:3, from his elder colleagues. But

given the Spartan yet fundamental character of the items in the 1 Corinthians 15 list, "one cannot help but wonder what would be the content of any kerygma which Paul might receive more directly from the risen Lord."[27]

Schütz expresses his dissatisfaction with other previous attempts to harmonize the two passages. Cullmann had suggested that there was no real conflict between the two passages since the Risen Christ both was the ultimate origin of the traditional material and remained active within it as it was transmitted.[28] Thus Paul merely denies in Galatians 1:11 that his gospel is of a fleshly, nondivine origin, while in 1 Corinthians 15:3 he makes no bones of the fact that there were intermediate tradents between the originating Lord and Paul as one of the receivers of the divinely created and transmitted gospel tradition. One either does or does not recognize such reasoning as a harmonization, the erection of an elaborate theoretical superstructure, itself never outlined in the texts, in order that we may have a single framework in which both texts may be made somehow to fit. Not only so, but on Cullmann's reading it becomes impossible to see the point of Paul's argument in Galatians: Galatians 1:12 makes it clear, surely, that Paul means to deny precisely his dependence on any human instruction.

Roloff's harmonization is of a different character, but no more helpful. He draws a distinction between the gospel of the resurrected Christ received by Paul at the time of his conversion, and hence taught by no apostolic predecessor, and the traditional statements of 1 Corinthians 15, which he had used to clothe, to flesh out, the preaching of the gospel to the Corinthians in former days. When he refers simply to the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1 he merely does not scruple to differentiate between form and content, husk and kernel.[29] Yet are we justified in reading such a distinction into the text in the first place? Certainly the author of this passage does not draw it. Rather, for him, these are the very logia that will save if adhered to. 1 Corinthians 15ff. means to offer a formulaic "faith once for all delivered to the saints." And we seem to be in the presence of a post-Pauline Paulinism, not too dissimilar to that of the Pastorals.

Schütz himself seeks another alternative. For him, Paul's gospel is not so much the basic facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus as it is the implications of those facts for Christian life and apostolic ministry. Because of the saving events, human sufficiency is negated, pure reliance on the Spirit is mandated. In Galatians, Paul must deal with those who would return to

fleshy self-reliance by means of a beguiling gospel of works. In 1 Corinthians he is dealing with those who believe that Christ's resurrection has brought a realized eschatological newness of life which in fact is only another disguise for the exaltation of the flesh in religious enthusiasm. In opposing the Galatian error, Paul declares the heavenly origin of his gospel—i.e., the heavenly origin of his message and the incarnation of it in his own apostolic existence. His gospel, so defined, is not from men. That is, Christian and apostolic sufficiency is not from men. In 1 Corinthians, he says the same thing when he notes in 15:10 what he has already said in 4:8–13, that in himself he is unworthy and impotent, but thanks to Christ, he is an effective apostle. In all this, according to Schütz, there is no need to deny that he may have inherited the saving facts of Christ from predecessors. Such facts, in and of themselves, are not quite the same as the gospel.[30] Schütz canvasses various passages in Paul where the phrases "my gospel" or "our gospel" occur, seeking to demonstrate in them the usage he has described,[31] but his application of this usage to 1 Corinthians 15 seems to me tortuous, inferring the outlines of a grand Paulinist polemic not actually visible in the text. Is not Schütz's harmonization victim to the same weakness as Cullmann's? Is there anything in either Galatians 1 or 1 Corinthians 15 to support such a superexegetical trellis?

The stubborn fact remains: in Galatians, Paul tells his readers that what he preached to them when he founded their church was not taught him by human predecessors. In 1 Corinthians 15 he is depicted as telling his readers that what he preached to them when he founded their church was taught him by human predecessors. In other words, the same process they underwent at his hands, instruction in the gospel fundamentals, he himself had previously undergone: "I delivered to you . . . what I also received." In fact what we see in 1 Corinthians is a picture of Paul that corresponds to that in Acts, the very version of his call and apostolate he sought to refute with an oath before God in Galatians 1:20.

THE FORMULA

According to most scholars, in verse 3b begins an ancient creedal/liturgical list of the essential facts of Christian salvation. The connective ὅτι ("that") introduces each article of the confession: ("I believe . . .")

That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;
That he was buried;
That he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures;
That he appeared . . .

Here scholarly unanimity vanishes. Most seem to feel that the credo extended at least this far,[32] some extending the original tradition to include the Twelve,[33] though Weiss excised the reference to the Twelve as a scribal gloss to harmonize the list with the Gospels.[34] Still others leave room for the reference to James and all the apostles.[35] Almost all would bracket the mentions of the 500 brethren (v. 6) and of Paul himself (vv. 8–10) as Pauline additions to the formula.

Before the Second World War, as Murphy-O'Connor notes,[36] most scholars took the whole complex down through verse 7 to form part of the same confessional formula. Since then, the tide has turned. However, many scholars, while severing all or part of the list of appearances from the creed concerning the death, burial, and resurrection, would nonetheless understand the list of appearances as at least representing another set of traditional materials which now appear as part of a structured whole, i.e., as a subsequent addition to the original formula, but still already part of the formulaic tradition delivered to the Corinthians.

Wilckens believes that Paul added the references to the 500 and himself to a traditional, though composite, formula of six members: he died for our sins, he was buried, he rose on the third day, he was seen, he was seen by Peter and the Twelve, he was seen by James and all the apostles.[37] Wilckens's dissection of the formula may be viewed in part as a modification of an earlier suggestion by Harnack that the core of the appearance list was the conflation of two independent, rival statements of appearances—to Peter and his followers, and to James and his. These were competing credential formulas on behalf of the two rival leaders of Jewish Christianity.[38] I will have occasion to return to this question, but for the present, it is sufficient to note that Wilckens has taken over Harnack's observation that the two membra found in verses 5 and 7 with their parallel ειτα . . . ἔπειτα structure most likely represent independent parallel formulae in their own right, later conflated, though Wilckens rejects Harnack's suggestion of a *Sitz-im-Leben* of church politics.[39]

The real point of originality in Wilckens's thesis is his partition of the creed of verses 3–5 into four separate previous traditions. He takes the instance of καὶ ὅτι in verse 5 to denote that the series of ὅτις represents not connectives between the articles of a creed, but rather Pauline connectives between disparate citations of scripture or of brief traditional formulae. Against Wilckens, Kramer, followed by Conzelmann, rejects such a usage as having no form-critical parallel.[40] Instead, Kramer reasons, the ὅτις were injected by Paul as punctuators, emphasizing the various points in the formula, as if to stress, "first . . . , second . . . , third. . . . " Murphy-O'Connor shows that elsewhere even in 1 Corinthians itself, ὅτι . . . και ὅτι is used to introduce quotations of phrases that followed one another immediately in the quoted source (the supposed letter to Paul from Corinth quoted in 1 Cor. 8:4).[41] This means that even though Wilckens may be right in denying that the uses of the ὅτι connector formed part of the original creed, it is still quite likely a creed that is being quoted. The ὅτις were never the principal reason for thinking the material to be a creed anyway.

Kearney thinks he sees behind verses 6–7 a pre-Pauline doxology formula stemming from the early Hellenistic community before the martyrdom of Stephen: "He appeared above to 500 brothers / Once for all to the apostles."[42] Though his alternative translations of ἐπάνω and ἐφάπαζ seem not unreasonable, I find the reconstruction of the implied redaction history arbitrary. But at least Kearney does detect the formulaic flavor of the verses. Stuhlmacher sees the parallelism in verses 3–5 and 5–7 as evidence of a careful stylization of the whole text, arguing that the unit formed by verses 3b–7 had already been joined in the pre-Pauline tradition. He believes that the formula developed from a bipartite proclamation of the atoning death and resurrection to include, initially, the scriptural proof, then the burial and the appearance to Peter, then those to the other witnesses, and finally Paul's reference to himself. Only the final stage is to be attributed to Paul.[43] Dodd, too, takes the appearance list to be part of the traditional material, regardless of its prior composition history: "This list of Christophanies Paul declares to form part of the kerygma, as it was set forth by all Christian missionaries of whatever rank or tendency (XV. 11), part of the 'tradition' which he received (XV.3)."[44]

The formulaic character of the repeated "thens" in verses 6–7 can no more be ignored than that of the repeated "thats" of verses 3–5. By the time

they reached 1 Corinthians 15, the two multimembered pieces of tradition had been fused. Thus I intend to treat verses 3–7 as a unit of formulaic tradition, beginning with the section of four ὅτι-clauses, followed by a subsection in which individual appearances are listed with the connectives ἔιτα, ἔπειτα:

> to Cephas,
> then [he appeared] to the Twelve,
> then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time,
> most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep,
> then he appeared to James,
> then [he appeared] to all the apostles.

As already anticipated, at least the clauses modifying the appearances to the 500 and to Paul himself ("most of whom are still alive" and "as to one untimely born") are additions by a later hand (whether Paul's or someone else's—see below), since they break the formal structure. We can see the same sort of later embellishment in both the Decalogues of Exodus 20 and 34. In the latter case, the embellishments threaten to obscure the barely discernible outline altogether.

Besides this there is the question whether a tradition delivered to Paul would include an account of Paul's own resurrection vision, especially if, on the assumption of most, the list/creed was formulated in Jerusalem, where Paul was not so well venerated, at least not unanimously enough to permit his inclusion in a creed.[45] Scholars universally conclude that Paul must have added the note on his own experience. I will leave that question for later attention.

Since the focus of the tradition seems to be on notable leaders of the community, the sudden mention of the 500 anonymous brethren seems to be an intrusion.[46] Beyond this, though, the reference to the 500, most still available for questioning, raises another major problem: what was the intended function of the list? Was it, as Bultmann holds, a piece of apologetics trying to prove the resurrection?[47] Or is Wilckens right, in which case the list is a list of credentials? One who claimed an apostolate had better have seen the Lord (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:1). These had.[48] The reference to the 500 unnamed witnesses certainly implies, as Sider argues,[49] that the list is an apologetical device, especially with the note of most of the crowd still being available for corroboration. But the focus on community leaders seems to me to demand

Wilckens's view. It is therefore not unlikely that the list began as a list of credentials for Cephas, the Twelve, James, and the other apostles, but that subsequently someone, reading the list as evidence for the resurrection, inserted the reference to the 500 brethren. I will return below to the question of apologetics versus credentials. It will appear in a new light following a discussion of various details of the list.

THE FIVE HUNDRED BRETHREN

I judge the very notion of a resurrection appearance to 500 at one time to be a late piece of apocrypha, reminiscent of the extravagances of the Acts of Pilate. If the claim of 500 witnesses were early tradition, can anyone explain its total absence from the gospel tradition? E. L. Allen sees the problem here: "Why did not the evangelists include the appearances of 1 Cor. XV? It is difficult to understand why the tradition behind 1 Cor. XV should be passed over if it was known. Was it then lost?"[50]

His answer is, "The Gospel narratives of the Resurrection are governed by another set of needs and meet another situation than those of the first kerygma."[51] But this is unsatisfactory on his own accounting, since all the apologetical and liturgical motives Allen sees at play in the gospels may be paralleled in the various functions suggested by scholars for the 1 Corinthians 15 list itself. Again, "If we suppose, as we well may, that this incident [the appearance to the 500] is to be located in Galilee, it is not difficult to imagine why it was not taken up into the mainstream of tradition."[52] But clearly the whole point of 1 Corinthians 15:11, and at least the clear implication of verses 5–7, is that the quoted creed *is* the mainstream of the tradition.

Barrett, on the other hand, counsels that "it may be better to recognize that the Pauline list and the gospel narratives of resurrection appearances cannot be harmonized into a neat chronological sequence."[53] But Barrett's agnosticism itself functions as a harmonization. It implies there is a great cloud of unknown circumstance: if we knew more we might be able to see where it all fits in. But in fact we know enough. It must at least be clear that if such an overwhelmingly potent proof of the resurrection had ever occurred it would have been widely repeated from the first. Surely no selection of res-

urrection appearances would have left it out. The story of the apparition to the 500 can only stem from a time posterior to the composition of the gospel tradition, and this latter, in comparison with Paul, is already very late.

True, ever since Christian Hermann Weisse, some scholars have tried to see the episode of the 500 dimly reflected in the Pentecost story of Acts 2.[54] Fuller, representing this position, asks, "Could it not be that, at an earlier stage of the tradition, the [Pentecost] pericope narrated an appearance of the Risen One in which he imparted the Spirit to the +500, as in the appearance to the disciples in John 20:19–23?"[55] But despite the considerable expenditure of scholarly ink the suggestion has generated, including its recent espousal by Gerd Lüdemann,[56] its epitaph must be the words of C. H. Dodd: "it remains a pure speculation."[57]

In fact, would it not be far more natural to suppose that if any connection existed between the two passages, the relation must be just the opposite? That, rather, an originally subjective pneumatic ecstasy on the part of a smaller number at Pentecost has been concretized into the appearance of the Risen Lord to a larger group on Easter? But then we are simply underscoring more heavily the apocryphal character of the result. Lüdemann unwittingly confirms this: "The number 'more than 500 brethren' is to be understood as 'an enormous number,' i.e., not taken literally. (Who could have counted?)"[58] It is just this sort of detail that denotes the fictive character of a narrative. It is like asking how the narrator knew the inner thoughts of a character: he knows them because he made them up![59] No more successful is the suggestion that the appearance to the 500 be identified with Luke 24:36ff. The same question presents itself: if there were as many as 500 present on that occasion, how can the evangelist have thought this "detail" unworthy of mention? And if we suppose he did include it, what copyist in his right mind would have omitted it?

Some might challenge my ascription of the 500 brethren note to a later period in view of the challenge to the reader to confirm the testimony of the 500 for himself. But the whole point is that the interpolation is Paulinist pseudepigraphy; the actual author (the anonymous interpolator) did not intend for the actual reader to interview the 500 in his own day. His invitation is issued by the narrator (Paul) to the narratees, the fictive readers, the first-century Corinthians. His point is that had the actual readers been lucky enough to live in Paul's day, we might have checked for ourselves.[60]

JAMES THE JUST

The appearance to James carries its own problems. As is well known, the gospel evidence differs strikingly over the question of whether James the Just was a disciple of his famous brother before the latter's resurrection. John (7:5) and Mark (3:21, 31–35), followed by Matthew (12:46–50), are clear that he was no friend of the ministry of Jesus. Luke, on the other hand (Luke 8:19–21; Acts 1:14), rejects this earlier tradition and instead strongly implies that the whole Holy Family were doers of Jesus' word from the beginning. Luke holds this implied portrayal of James in common with certain other late pro-James traditions such as we find in the Gospel of Thomas, logion 12:

> The disciples said to Jesus: We know that you will depart from us. Who is to be our leader? Jesus said to them: Wherever you are, you are to go to James the righteous, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being. (Trans. T. O. Lambdin, *NHL*, 127)

and the Gospel according to the Hebrews:

> And when the Lord had given the cloth to the servant of the priest, he went to James and appeared to him. For James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he had drunk the cup of the Lord until he should see him risen from among them that sleep. And . . . the Lord said: Bring a table and bread! And . . . he took the bread, blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to James the Just and said to him: My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of man is risen from among them that sleep. (Trans. M. R. James)[61]

For this tradition there is no thought of any conversion of James from unbeliever to believer. That the resurrection appearance vouchsafed him is simply of a piece with the others: an appearance granted to a disciple. Indeed nowhere in the tradition of early Christianity do we find the appearance to James likened unto that of Paul: the apprehension of an enemy of Christ to turn him into a friend. This notion, which serves the agenda of modern apologists[62] seeking to disarm the suspicions of those who point out that Jesus appeared only to believers, is quite common among critical scholars as well.[63]

Nonetheless, it is an exegetical phantom. Nowhere is this connection made in the texts. True, we have an unbelieving James, a believing James, and an apparition of the Risen Christ to James, but the relationship between these textual phenomena is other than is usually surmised.

If James was not "turned around" by an appearance of the Risen Jesus, how else can we account for his assumption of an early leadership role in the church? The answer is not far to seek. He was the eldest brother of King Messiah. Once honored for this accident of birth, he did not see fit to decline it. One might well remain aloof to a movement in which one's brother was the leader yet soon warm to it once the leadership role were offered to oneself.

The sheer fact of James' blood relation to Jesus is by itself so powerful, so sufficient a credential that when we find another, a resurrection appearance, placed alongside it in the tradition, we must immediately suspect a secondary layer of tradition. And fortunately we have a striking historical analogy that will help us understand the *Tendenz* at work in such embellishment. James' claim was precisely parallel to that of Ali, the son-in-law and nephew of the Prophet Muhammad. Ali's "partisans" (Arabic: Shi'ites) advanced his claim to the Caliphate upon the death of Muhammad on the theory that the prophetic succession should follow the line of physical descent.[64] Later legend claims that Ali was entitled to the position on the strength of his piety and charisma,[65] a tacit concession that blood relation was no longer deemed adequate for spiritual leadership (cf. Mark 3:31–35). Finally he is made, in retrospect, the recipient of new angelic revelations like those of the Prophet himself, taking down the dictation of the *Mushaf Fatima*, one of the Shi'ite holy books.[66]

Similarly, Hegesippus passes along legendary tales of the exemplary piety of "James the brother of the Lord," who "was called 'the Just' by all men, from the Lord's time until our own," since "he was holy from his mother's womb," who had callouses on his knees from long vigils of prayer on behalf of unrepentant Israel, and whose testimony to Jesus as the Saviour convinced many, who had previously rejected the resurrection, to believe.[67] The final stage in the beatification of James the Just was to assimilate him to the pattern of the Twelve, late traditions making him a faithful disciple already before the Cross (present even at the Last Supper!) and the recipient of a special resurrection appearance. It is here that I think 1 Corinthians 15:7 joins the historical stream. The note of James' resurrection vision carries no

hint of anything exceptional, as might be expected if the appearance had turned an enemy into a friend, the like of which is noted in the case of Paul in verse 8. The implication, of course, is that the tradition at this point, as in the case of the 500 brethren, is apocryphal and post-Pauline. To be clear, however, let me note that on my reading, the appearance to James the Just was an original part of the list, marking the whole list as post-Pauline, while the note about the 500 is later still, an interpolation redolent of much later legendary extravagance.

JAMES VERSUS CEPHAS

I will now return to the much-disputed question of whether the appearances to Cephas and the Twelve and to James and all the apostles represent rival traditions. I believe Harnack was essentially correct and that the criticisms of Conzelmann, von Campenhausen, Kloppenborg, Fuller, and others are not decisive.

Fuller, for example, first points out that if the two independent formulae suggested by Harnack had been added onto the death and resurrection kerygma of verses 3–5b, then we would have to leave that kerygma in its original form ending, implausibly, with "appeared."[68] But some scholars have suggested we do this on independent grounds anyway, e.g., for the symmetry that would then exist between the short membra "that he was buried" and "that he appeared."

Second, Fuller argues, "[O]n Harnack's analysis, the appearance to the five hundred is left in isolation, belonging neither to the Cephas formula nor to the James formula. In either position it would destroy the parallelism between the two formulae and can only be explained as an independent tradition or as a Pauline insertion."[69] Then that is the way to explain it; Fuller has answered his own objection.

Third, Fuller maintains that "the theory of an outright rivalry between a Peter- and a James-party is speculative. There is no real evidence for this in the New Testament." And as if uneasy about this absolute statement Fuller immediately adds, "Galatians 2:11 shows that there were for a time differences between Peter and James on the interpretation of the 'gentlemen's agreement' (Gal 2.9–10), but to speak of a rivalry goes beyond the facts."[70] But is not Fuller's reading of the Galatians passage itself a going beyond the

facts, setting them into a harmonizing, catholicizing model? At question is precisely the interpretation of these facts. He seeks to forestall a critical interpretation of the facts with an apologetical reading of his own. And besides, there is certainly material in the New Testament that is polemically aimed at James and the heirs (John 7:5; Mark 3:21, 31–35) as well as pro-Peter polemic (Matt. 16:18–19) and anti-Peter polemic (Mark's story of his denials of Christ, hardly neutral material),[71] followed by the denial narratives of all the gospels; contrast the milder Johannine shadowing of Peter in favor of the Beloved Disciple.[72] A James versus Peter conflict is as plausible a *Sitz-im-Leben* for such materials as any.

Fourth, Fuller observes that for the compiler of the 1 Corinthians 15 list (whom he thinks to be Paul himself) the relation between these various appearances was a strictly chronological one, the order of which was verifiable.[73] This calls for two responses. To begin with, there is no question that the ειτα . . . ἔπειτα structure of the list as it now stands implies temporal sequence; but this may simply be the gratuitous assumption of the redactor of the list. Second, Fuller's own assumption (shared by O'Collins, von Campenhausen, and others)[74] that Paul himself compiled the list on the basis of extensive interviewing of the principal players is a fanciful piece of historicization. To realize just how fanciful it is, one need only read Bishop's "The Risen Christ and the Five Hundred Brethren,"[75] which makes explicit the dubious scenario implicit in all such suggestions: Paul taking the role, usually assigned Luke, as a pilgrim to the Holy Land seeking out various living saints willing to reminisce about the great days of old when angels whispered in one's ear and dead men tapped one on the shoulder.

Conzelmann and Kümmel add the argument against Harnack's view that there seems to be no polemical edge or tone discernible in either of the supposed rival credential-formulae.[76] But this is far from certain, as I hope to show.

Many scholars exercise themselves over the meaning of the "all" in "all the apostles" (v. 7). Many think the reference is to the larger group of missionaries, including, for example, such persons as Andronicus and Junia, as well as the narrower circle of the Twelve.[77] Schmithals thinks "all the apostles" excludes the Twelve, since the latter were not regarded as apostles until the second century when Luke melded the two categories together.[78] In all this there would indeed be no polemic. But what if, as Winter suggests, "all the apostles" means to *ex*clude James but to *in*clude Peter and the rest of the

Twelve? Then the sense would plausibly be construed as a polemical counter to the "Cephas, then to the Twelve" formula. The point would be that the Risen Christ appeared first to James, and only then to the apostles, including Peter. Not Peter first, followed by his colleagues, but rather James first, followed by Peter and the rest.[79] Seen this way, it becomes obvious that the James formula is the later of the two, since its very wording presupposes the Cephas formula.

Lüdemann sees this: "The formula in 1 Cor. 15:7 grew out of the fact that disciples of James claimed for their leader the primacy that Peter enjoyed by virtue of having received the initial resurrection appearance. To support his claim they constructed the formula of 15:7, patterned after that of 15:5."[80] But, as we will see, Lüdemann explains "all the apostles" in a different and, I think, unsatisfying way.

In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Gordon Fee rejects the Harnack theory simply by reference to Schmithals's "refutation" of Harnack.[81] But here is all Schmithals has to say on the subject:

> *I do not consider correct* the thesis . . . about the two primitive communities, *nor am I able to persuade myself* that Peter and James were rivals in Jerusalem. In the first place, *I do not believe* that one could have attempted in the earliest times to set James up as the first witness of the resurrection in place of Peter. In I Cor. 15:6–7 itself, however, there appears no clue for the assertion that here a rival tradition to vs. 5 is employed. These verses rather exclude any such assumption.[82] (italics added)

While it is evident that Schmithals, like Fee, disdains Harnack's theory, his words just quoted can hardly be called refutation, being merely sentiments of distaste and incredulity. One suspects that Schmithals's antipathy toward the Harnack hypothesis is occasioned by Harnack's equation of "the Twelve" in verse 5 and "the apostles" in verse 7. Schmithals, of course, has argued persuasively that these two groups are not connected/conflated until the late Luke-Acts. One pillar of his theory is that this connection is made nowhere in earlier New Testament material, including Paul, who always keeps the Twelve and the apostles separate. To accept Harnack's argument here would seem to force Schmithals to admit that Paul (or whoever framed the list) had already equated the Twelve and the apostles.

But the solution to Schmithals's plight is a simple one: the list with its

equation of the Twelve and the apostles is ipso facto shown to be not only post-Pauline, but even post-Lukan, since the list takes the conflation for granted. Could there still have been sectarian strife between the Peter and James factions this late? Indeed there was, as is shown by late apocrypha like the Letter of Peter to James, which subordinates the former to the latter, as well as by the preferential treatment given to James the Just over Peter in the Gospel according to the Hebrews, where we read that, unlike Peter, the stalwart James maintained his faith without wavering until Easter morning.

Lüdemann, too, is plunged into confusion by his early dating of the list. While he accepts Schmithals's disentangling of the Twelve and the apostles, he yet maintains that already for Paul the phrase "all the apostles" included the Twelve within a larger group.[83] He could hold consistently to Schmithals's excellent schema if he would only recognize the late character of the list. Dodd, while apparently innocent of such wrangling, admits that Harnack's suggestion has "some plausibility,"[84] while Winter and Lüdemann accept it wholeheartedly,[85] as does Stauffer,[86] showing how Harnack's proposed *Sitz-im-Leben* fits in well with what else can be surmised about factional polemics within Jewish Christianity of the first and second centuries. Again Dodd: "But in that case we must certainly take it that the two lists had been combined before the formula was transmitted to Paul,"[87] i.e., before it reached the form in which it appears in 1 Corinthians 15.

The trouble is, can we really allow the presumably long process of sectarian evolution, factional polemics, and tradition-formation that must lie behind the rival formulas—already by the time of Paul? As Patterson observes, "[T]he 50's CE is a little early for apostolic authority to have exercised an overwhelming power in shaping the tradition."[88] And since the conflation of the two formulas must be a catholicizing measure,[89] it must have come significantly later than the now-cooling sectarian infighting it presupposes. Grass is on the right track here: The harmonization of competing traditions is the affair of a later generation. "A writer who stands far distant from the events does such a thing, but not a person who, like Paul, has an immediate relationship with the persons and events."[90] What he does not see, however, is that the harmonizing conflation was not Paul's idea. On the assumption that Paul wrote it, there wouldn't have been enough time, so Grass is sent searching for some other exegesis. But if this bit of tradition postdates Paul then there would seem to be plenty of the time required for

it to serve the catholicizing purpose Grass rejects. Whereas Grass dismisses the notion of a catholicizing harmonization because of its incompatibility with Pauline authorship, I regard the opposite course to be the better: since the harmonization of the two lists is apparent, why not rather concede that its redactor was an "early catholic" like Luke, not a man of the age of Paul? And scarcely Paul himself.

THE RECOLLECTIONS OF AN EYEWITNESS?

I submit that even if the postapostolic character of the James material were not apparent, we would still be able to recognize the spurious character of the whole tradition from one simple but neglected fact. If the author of this passage were himself an eyewitness of the resurrection, why would he seek to buttress his claims by appeal to a thirdhand list of appearances formulated by others and delivered to him? Had he forgotten the appearance he himself had seen?

We are faced by a similar problem in the case of the old claim for the apostolic authorship of the (so-called) Gospel of Matthew. All scholars now admit that the author of this gospel simply cannot have been an eyewitness of the ministry of Jesus, since he employs secondary sources (Mark and Q), themselves patchworks of well-worn fragments. It is just inconceivable that an eyewitness apostle would not have depended upon his own recollections. This gospel was not penned by the disciple Matthew.

As an ostensible Pauline addition, verse 8 is even more embarrassing to the notion of Pauline authorship, and for the same reason. For all we have in it is the bare assertion that there was an appearance to Paul. Would not a genuine eyewitness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ have had more to say about it once the subject had come up? Luke certainly thought so, as he does not tire of having Paul describe in impressive detail what the Risen Christ said to him (Acts 22.6–11; 26.12–18). While these accounts are in fact Lukan creations, my point is that they illustrate the naturalness of the assumption that an actual eyewitness of the Risen Christ would hardly be as tight-lipped on the subject as "Paul" is in 1 Corinthians 15:8. In 2 Corinthians 12:1–10, Paul declares himself reticent to share his heavenly revelations—but this very statement is found in the middle of a miniature apocalypse that is hardly unspectacular in itself!

The problem becomes particularly acute with Vielhauer's discussion of the passage.[91] According to his interpretation of the whole epistle, particularly 1:10–4:7 and chapter 9, Paul is fighting against claims for Petrine primacy being circulated in Corinth by the Cephas party. He aims everywhere to assert his own equality (and that of Apollos) with Cephas. If this is the case, however, when he turns to the topic of the resurrection in chapter 15, why would he risk losing all he has thus far built by introducing a formula which draws special attention to the primacy of Cephas as the first witness of the resurrection? Surely it would have been much more natural for Paul to pass over this inconvenient fact in silence. If he had wanted to begin his discussion by reaffirming the resurrection of Jesus, why would he not rather appeal to his own recollections, which certainly must have been more vivid, not to mention safer?

One might reply that Paul needed to cite the formula in order to underscore the ecumenical character of the resurrection preaching since he was attempting to reason with all the Corinthian factions, including the Cephas party, and he dared not leave anyone out. But as Vielhauer himself admits, there is no reason to assign the specific Corinthian problems to any of the various apostle-boosting parties in particular.[92] Paul would need to call Cephas as a witness (by citing the formula) only if the Cephas party denied the resurrection, and there is no reason to think they did.

Verse 8, like the whole passage, is no more the work of the Apostle Paul, eyewitness to the Risen One, than the Gospel of Matthew is the work of one of Jesus' disciples. On the other hand, seeing that the whole is post-Pauline, verse 8 might originally have formed part of the formula if it mentioned Paul in the third person: "Last of all he appeared to Paul." The "last of all" does fit well as the conclusion of a series of clauses beginning with "Then . . . , then . . . , then. . . . " Scholars have omitted verse 8 from the list only because it was naturally hard to imagine that Paul's own Christophany formed part of a list repeated to Paul by his predecessors. But if the list is a late, catholicizing fragment it might well have mentioned Paul.

A CONTEXT FOR THE LIST: VERSES 3, 9–11

The third-person reference would have been changed to the first person by a Paulinist who set it into the context of verses 3 and 9–11. These verses are

themselves an interpolation into the argument which once flowed smoothly from verse 2 to verse 12. They are part of an apologia for Paul made by a spirit kindred to the writer of the Pastorals. The writer wished to vindicate Paul's controversial heresy-tinged apostolate in the eyes of his fellow "early catholics" by doing what Luke did at about the same time: assimilating Paul to the Twelve and James. As van Manen noted, verse 10b clearly looks back in history from a distant perspective from which one is able to estimate the sum of the labors of all the apostles, a time when their labors are long past.[93]

In verse 8, the κάμοὶ means not "also me," but rather "even me," because the point is that Christ in his grace condescended to appear even to the chief of sinners (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15–16). The Pauline apologist altered the Παυλω of the original text of the list to κάμοὶ when he changed the third-person reference to a first-person one, in order to tie it in more securely.

Originally 15:12 followed immediately on verses 1–2. It read, "Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain. But if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?"

To translate δέ in verse 12 as "Now" is to imply a taking stock after the exposition of verses 3–11. But we may just as easily translate it "But," implying a direct contrast with verse 2. Then the idea would be: This gospel as I preached it is your salvation—unless of course it was all a big mistake! But you are saying it was a mistake since you are denying the resurrection of Christ!

THE FRAGMENT INTERPOLATED

I have already suggested that the original list was set into the context of an apologetic for Paul, resulting in the fragment we find in verses 3–11. Presumably there was more to this document than now appears, but what remains was preserved by being set into the larger context of chapter 15, where it does not really fit. Several scholars have noted an odd lack of continuity between the pericope of verses 3–11 and the rest of the chapter:

> I can understand the text only as an attempt to make the resurrection of Christ credible as an objective historical fact. And I see only that Paul is

betrayed by his apologetic into contradicting himself. For what Paul says in vv. 20–22 of the death and resurrection of Christ cannot be said of an objective historical fact. (Bultmann)[94]

[Vv. 3–5 are] a formula which seems to have little influence on the rest of the chapter. (C. F. Evans)[95]

Chap. 15 is a self-contained treatise on the resurrection of the dead, [although] it is only from v 12 onward that this topic becomes plain to the reader. . . . Up to this point one is rather inclined to expect an exposition on the tradition of the apostolate. (Conzelmann)[96]

[The interpretation of the formula as apostolic credentials, otherwise plausible, is to be rejected because:] It nowhere appears from the context that Paul is seeking to legitimize his apostolic status, as is often argued. The context shows Paul reacting to a false idea of resurrection among the Corinthians. (Schillebeeckx)[97]

In all these cases the exegete is surprised at the apparent lack of congruity between the formula and the argument of the rest of the chapter. The most probable solution, however, is simply that verses 3–11 constitute an interpolation.[98]

Why would anyone have made such an interpolation? A scribe felt he could strengthen the argument of the chapter as a whole by prefacing it with a list of "evidences for the resurrection." In short, he was no longer interested in (or even aware of) the original function of the list as apostolic credentials. That was all a dead issue. No one any longer disputed the authority of any of the great apostolic names, who were all regarded only as sainted figures of the past. He could take the authority of the lot for granted. In his day, by contrast, debates concerned who had the right to appeal to the apostles as a whole. He and the hated Gnostics alike claimed the whole apostolic college. So instead he saw the value of the list solely as a piece of apologetics for the historical resurrection. And it was this scribe, I suggest, who also interpolated the reference to the 500 brethren, a clearly apologetic intrusion, as we have seen. Why did he not trim the now-extraneous verses 9–10? He simply overshot the mark, as when the Fourth Evangelist drew John 13:16 from a list of mission instructions much like Matthew chapter 10, where the same saying occurs (Matt. 10:24), and retained the now-pointless John 13:20 along with it (cf. Matt. 10:40).

On my view, then, Wilckens correctly discerned the intent of the orig-

inal list and of its use by an advocate of Paul's apostolate, while Bultmann just as correctly detected the intention of the scribal interpolator of verses 3–11 into chapter 15 and of verse 6 into the list. Wilckens and Bultmann were both right. The trouble lay in their assumption that the whole text was a Pauline unity.

RECENT CRITERIA

By way of conclusion, though I have sought to argue my case in terms of its own logic, I would like to measure my results against a set of criteria for pinpointing interpolations compiled by Winsome Munro from her own work as well as that of P. N. Harrison, William O. Walker Jr., Robert T. Fortna, and others.[99]

First, I freely admit the lack of direct textual evidence. There are no extant copies of 1 Corinthians which lack my passage. While the presence of such texts would greatly strengthen my argument, the lack of them does not stultify it. There simply are no texts at all for the period in which I suggest the interpolation occurred. With Walker, however, I believe the prima facie likelihood is that many interpolations occurred in those early days,[100] on analogy with the subsequent, traceable textual tradition, as well as with the cases of other interpolated, expanded, and redacted canonical and noncanonical texts.[101]

Second, as for perceived disparities between the ideologies of the supposed interpolation and its context, I have already sought to demonstrate that the tendencies of the passage, both the catholicizing apologetic and the Jacobean-Petrine polemics, are either alien to Paul or anachronistic for him.

Third, though stylistic and linguistic differences, often a sign of interpolation, appear in the text, they are not pivotal for my argument, since they could just as easily denote pre-Pauline tradition taken over by the apostle.

Fourth, as I have indicated, it is not rare to find scholars remarking on the ill fit of the passage in its present context, as Munro suggests we ought to expect in the case of an interpolation. I have suggested that the argument flows better without this piece of text.

Fifth, Munro notes that the case for an interpolation is strengthened if we can show its dependence on an allied body of literature otherwise known to be later in time than the text we believe to have suffered interpolation. In her own work, *Authority in Paul and Peter*, she connects the Pastoral Stratum

with the Pastoral Epistles. I have argued not for direct dependence but for relatedness of themes and concerns with later polemics and traditions on display in works like the Gospel according to the Hebrews, the Epistle of Peter to James, and Luke-Acts. These factors would also seem to satisfy Munro's sixth criterion, that of literary or historical coherence with a later period than that of the host document.

Seventh, as to external attestation, though snippets of my passage (including few if any of the "appearance" statements, interestingly) appear here and there in Patristic sources, these citations are indecisive, since writers like Tertullian and Irenaeus are too late to make any difference, while in my view the date and genuineness of 1 Clement and the Ignatian corpus are open questions.

The eighth criterion is that of indirect textual evidence, minor variations between different texts all containing the body of the disputed passage.[102] Fee notes that a few textual witnesses (Marcion, b, and Ambrosiaster) lack "what I also received" in verse 3.[103] Perhaps a few scribes sought to harmonize 1 Corinthians with Galatians by omitting the words; or else most scribes sought by adding them to subordinate Paul to the Twelve.

Ninth and last, I have provided a plausible explanation for the motivation of the interpolations, both of the list into the apologetic fragment, and of the fragment into 1 Corinthians 15. The first sought to homogenize Paul and the other apostolic worthies, while the second sought to buttress the argument for the resurrection by adding a passage listing eyewitnesses to it.

Though, as Munro says, the weighing of the evidence and of the various criteria must be left to the judgment of each scholar, I venture to say that the emergent hypothesis, while it can in the nature of the case never be more than an unverifiable speculation, can claim a significant degree of plausibility as one among many options for making sense of the passage.

APPENDIX: WILLIAM LANE CRAIG'S CRITIQUE

In a public debate on the resurrection in the New Testament,[104] apologist William Lane Craig offered several criticisms of the foregoing article, and it seems worthwhile answering the strongest of them here. I will leave aside a few minor points such as Craig's refusal to countenance the notions that there ever were any power struggles between James and Peter factions, or that

authority in the early Christian movement was based on claims to have been vouchsafed an appearance of the Risen Lord. These points seem to me too well established in contemporary New Testament scholarship to need reiteration here. I want to address what Craig calls the "internal evidence" which he says "strongly supports authenticity" for 1 Corinthians 15:3–11.

Craig contends that "1 Corinthians 15:1 wouldn't make sense if verses 3–11 were an interpolation: Paul would *not* be 'making known to you the gospel that [he] preached to [them],'" i.e., without the formula set forth in verses 3–5. But I think he would. The making known, or reminder, as some translate it, is implicit (even explicit) in verse 12, which I take as the original immediate continuation of verse 2: "If Christ is preached, that he has been raised from the dead." (The δε obviously comes from the interpolator).

"Moreover, the first person plural pronouns in verses 12–15 (like 'our preaching is in vain' and 'we are found to be misrepresenting Christ') refer back to the apostles in verses 9–11, so that if we say these verses are an interpolation, these pronouns would have no antecedents." But 1 Corinthians abounds in abrupt, unconscious transitions between "I" (Paul) (4:15) and "we"—purely formal, albeit inconsistent, inclusions of his colleagues Sosthenes (1:1), Apollos (3:6–9), Barnabas (9:5–6), or the apostles generally (1:23; 2:13; 4:9–10). Note the rapid switch in 9:3–4: "*My* answer to them who examine *me* is this: Have *we* not authority to eat and drink?"

"Moreover," Craig observes, "when Paul says 'Christ is preached as raised from the dead' [verse 12], that refers back to verse 11, 'so we preached and so you believed.' Dr. Price might say, 'No, it refers back to verse 1, where Paul says, 'I preached to you the gospel.' But here's where English translations can be misleading. In Greek this is a totally different verb than the verb in verse 12. Verse 12 matches the verb in verse 11, and *that* is the gospel Paul refers to in verse 12." I do not see the problem here at all. There is such a thing as a synonym, after all, and it is hard to see why it should present more of a problem for κηρυσσεται in verse 12 to follow up ευαγγελισαμην in verse 1 than for κηρυσσομεν in verse 11 to do so.

"Moreover, this past perfect form of the Greek verb, 'he has been raised,' is a non-Pauline verb. It is found nowhere else in the Pauline corpus. Where does it come from? It refers back to verse 4, 'he was raised,' quoted from the tradition Paul received." My initial response here is the standard one apologists like to offer when confronted with evidence of anomalous vocabulary: it

is the context, unusual for Paul, that requires the unusual verb form. Usually we find him proclaiming the resurrection, saying things like "God raised him from the dead" (Romans 10:9), or "[Jesus] whom he raised from the dead" (1 Thess. 1:10) or "Jesus died and rose again" (1 Thess. 4:14), simple pasts. But in 1 Corinthians 15 we hear Paul occupied not with proclamation but with theology, reflection on what *has* transpired. In Paul's mind is the one-two punch of the resurrection: "every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:23). The use of the perfect tense in verses 12 and 13 refers to the "holding pattern" in which the ages, for Paul, are momentarily locked. The first stage *has* occurred, because Christ *has* been raised. We await the second, because we have not yet joined him in the end-time resurrection. He wouldn't have to put it this way, but it makes good sense that he does. Thus I see no necessary allusion back to 1 Corinthians 15:4 at all. Furthermore, on Craig's reading, we would face a whole new difficulty. Why should the form "has been raised" be so rare in Paul if he derived it from the ecumenical formula of 1 Corinthians 15:3ff.? If we regard verses 3–11 as authentically Pauline we would have to expect a wide use of the formula by Paul in his gospel preaching, and surely some of that would have worn off on his usage in the epistles. But by Craig's own account, the verb form is rare in Paul. This is quite odd if Paul really wrote verses 3–11, quoting a venerable preaching formula he himself shared with the other apostles.

> The logic of the chapter requires the authenticity of these verses. Paul presents a syllogism:
>
> (1) If the dead are not raised, Christ has not been raised.
> (2) Christ has been raised.
> (3) Therefore, the dead are raised and the Corinthians are wrong.
>
> The evidence for the second premise is all of the evidence for the resurrection appearances in verses 3–8. If you leave these out, then you emasculate Paul's evidence for his second premise. By omitting these verses you destroy the logic of this chapter.

But we may ask if Craig has correctly captured the logic of the chapter. It seems to me, for one thing, that Craig has conflated two embryonic syllogisms. First,

(1) The dead are not raised.
(2) Christ died.
(3) Christ has not been raised.

Second,

(1) Christ died.
(2) Christ has been raised.
(3) The dead may rise.

The first is a deductive argument, the second an inductive. But there is no need for evidence for the inductive argument, since Paul manifestly assumes the Corinthians already share with him the belief in Christ's resurrection: "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (verse 14). The preaching of Paul and the Corinthians' acceptance of it are alike falsified if Christ has not been raised, because his preaching and their faith are the same: they agree with him on this point. Thus the force of his first "syllogism," that of a *reductio ad absurdum*. Paul thinks the Corinthians are inconsistent in that they believe Christ has been raised from the dead yet refuse to acknowledge that believers will be resurrected, too. Their unbelief regarding eschatological resurrection seems to Paul to stem from a Sadducee-like skepticism about the whole idea of resurrection ("Why should it be considered incredible among you people for God to raise the dead?" Acts 26:8), and yet they believe the resurrection kerygma in the case of Christ. Well, of course, Paul is ill-informed or confused about the views of the Corinthians who more likely hold, a la Colossians 3:1, that the resurrection has occurred already in baptism, and that there will be immortality; it just won't involve the resurrection of the physical husk—a view he seems to share (1 Cor. 15:42–44). So the resurrection of Jesus is not even at issue in 1 Corinthians 15. "Evidence for the resurrection" is way out of place there, as Bultmann and others I have quoted observed.

Finally, Craig thinks he can harmonize the appearance to the 500 brethren with the seeming silence of the gospels on the matter by suggesting that the appearance to the multitude took place *in Galilee*, as if that would for some reason disqualify it. But then so did Matthew's mountaintop epiphany in Matthew 28:16ff., not to mention John's appearance by the Sea

of Tiberias (John 21), and in any case it is not clear why the gospels should be uninterested in Galilean appearances. On second thought, Craig suggests the Matthew 28 scene might have been the appearance to the 500. But then this "detail" would certainly be an odd one for Matthew to omit, never mind that there is no question of a traditional Easter story here anyway. Matthew has simply built an almost-story onto Mark's abortive note (Mark 16:7) that the Risen Christ *would* have been there to meet Peter and his brethren in Galilee had they known to show up. Getting ahead of himself, Matthew refers in passing to some unnarrated command to go to a particular mountain. Which one? Why, the one Jesus is always climbing in this gospel: the mountain of revelation, the Axis Mundi from whence proceedeth all revelation. Trying for some effect like Luke 24:36–43, where the disciples at first do not believe their eyes, then have their doubts yield to adoring worship, Matthew instead merely coughs up an unsorted lot of the requisite story elements: "seeing him, they worshipped him, but they doubted" (28:17). And the words of Jesus to the disciples are pure Matthean composition. The only way to find five hundred disciples on stage here is if the playwright, Matthew himself, so stipulated it, and he did not. Matthew was not *re*counting a story he had heard (in which case he might conceivably have left out the juiciest detail of all); rather, he is making it up as he goes along. And in the latter case, it makes no sense at all to find in his story a detail he does not put there.

NOTES

1. A. M. Hunter, *Paul and his Predecessors* (London: SCM, 1961), p. 15.

2. Frederik W. Wisse, "Textual Limits to Redactional Theory in the Pauline Corpus," in *Gospel Origins and Christian Beginnings: In Honor of James M. Robinson*, ed. J. E. Goehring et al., vol. 1, *Forum Fascicles* (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1990), pp. 167–78; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians," *CBQ* 48 (1986): 81–94.

3. Wisse, "Textual Limits," p. 170.

4. Ibid.

5. Winsome Munro, "Interpolation in the Epistles: Weighing Probability," *NTS* 36 (1990): 431–43.

6. William O. Walker Jr., "The Burden of Proof in Identifying Interpolations in the Pauline Letters," *NTS* 33 (1987): 610–18.

7. Ibid., p. 614; cf. Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 277: "this study has reinforced the notion that theologically motivated

changes of the text are to be anticipated particularly during the early centuries of transmission, when both the texts and the theology of early Christianity were in a state of flux, prior to the development of a recognized creed and an authoritative and (theoretically) inviolable canon of Scripture." See also pp. 55 and 97.

8. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), p. 41: "Rather than understand the text as an adequate reflection of the reality about which it speaks, we must search for clues and allusions that indicate the reality about which the text is silent."

9. James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), pp. 85–87.

10. Wisse, "Textual Limits," p. 170.

11. Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), pp. 174–76.

12. See, for example, Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 102; Ralph P. Martin, *Colossians: The Church's Lord and the Christian's Liberty* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1972), p. 75; Stephen Neill, *Paul to the Colossians*, World Christian Books, third series, no. 50 (New York: Association Press, 1964), p. 11 ("It is probable that Paul picks up some of the phrases used by the false teachers, and himself uses them sarcastically."); Oscar Cullmann, *The New Testament: An Introduction for the General Reader* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), p. 81.

13. Murphy-O'Connor, "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians," p. 83.

14. Ibid.

15. C. S. Lewis, "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism," in *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), p. 163.

16. Wisse, "Textual Limits," p. 172.

17. Ibid.

18. William O. Walker Jr., "Text-Critical Evidence for Interpolations in the Letters of Paul," *CBQ* 50 (1988): 625; Munro, "Interpolation," 432–39.

19. Wisse, "Textual Limits," p. 173: "Indeed, in view of the heavy burden of proof, it would appear that in practice it is virtually impossible to make a convincing case for any interpolation that lacks manuscript support."

20. The family resemblance of Wisse's and Warfield's approaches is evident: "(1) Let it be proved that each alleged statement occurred certainly in the original autographa of the sacred book in which it is said to be found. (2) Let it be proved that the interpretation which occasions the apparent discrepancy is the one which the passage was evidently intended to bear. It is not sufficient to show a difficulty, which may spring out of our defective knowledge of the circumstances. The true meaning must be definitely and certainly ascertained, and then shown to be irreconcilable with other known truth. (3) Let it be proved that the true sense of some part of the original autographa is directly and necessarily inconsistent with some certainly known fact of history, or truth of science, or some other statement of Scripture certainly ascertained and interpreted. We believe that it can be shown that this has never yet been successfully done in the case of one single alleged instance of error in the Word of God." (A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield, "Inspiration," *Presbyterian Review* [April 1881]: 242.)

21. It is worth noting that the arguments of Wisse and his congeners would seem to mirror precisely those of fundamentalists who dismiss source criticism as groundless and speculative. After all, we don't have any actual manuscripts of J, E, P, or Q, do we? Walker and Munro, it seems to me, are simply extending the analytical tools of the classical source critics into textual criticism. Would Wisse and the others argue, as the Old Princeton apologists once did, that we must uphold Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch or the unitary authorship of Isaiah until these traditional views are "proven guilty"? I doubt it.

22. Murphy-O'Connor, "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians," p. 85.

23. Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Scribners, n.d.), p. 18.

24. Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), p. 129.

25. Fee, *Corinthians*, p. 717.

26. Ibid., p. 718.

27. John Howard Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, SNTSMS 26 (New York: Cambridge, 1975), p. 81.

28. Oscar Cullmann, "The Tradition: The Exegetical, Historical and Theological Problem," in idem, *The Early Church* (New York: Scribners, 1956), pp. 68–69.

29. J. Roloff, *Apostolat-Verkündigung-Kirche* (Gütersloh, 1965), p. 92.

30. Schütz, *Apostolic Authority*, pp. 35–83 (= ch. 3, "The Gospel, the Kerygma and the Apostle").

31. Ibid., pp. 71–78.

32. E.g., Michaelis, *TDNT*, pp. 5, 358ff.

33. Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), p. 251; Fee, *Corinthians*, p. 723; Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), p. 35.

34. Johannes Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1910), p. 330; cf. idem, *The History of Primitive Christianity* (New York: Wilson-Erickson, 1937), p. 24.

35. Reginald H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), p. 11.

36. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Tradition and Redaction in 1 Cor. 15:3–7," *CBQ* 43 (1981): 584.

37. Wilckens's view (neatly summarized in Fuller, *Formation*, pp. 13ff) was set forth first in his work *Die Missionsreden der Apostelgeschichte* (Neukirchen: Neukirchner Verlag, 1960); cf. idem, "Der Ursprung der Überlieferung der Erscheinungen des Auferstandenen," in *Dogma und Denkstruktüren*, ed. W. Joest and W. Pannenberg (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck und Ruprecht, 1963), pp. 56–95; "The Tradition-history of the Resurrection of Jesus," in *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, ed. C. F. D. Moule (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, 1968), pp. 51–76; and *Resurrection, Biblical Testimony to the Resurrection: An Historical Examination and Explanation* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1978), pp. 6–15.

38. Adolf von Harnack, "Die Verklärungsgeschichte Jesu, der Bericht des Paulus I Kor 15, 3 ff. und die beiden Christusvision des Petrus" (*Sitzungsberichte der Berliner Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Phil.-hist. Klasse, 1922), pp. 62–80.

39. Wilckens, "Tradition-history," p. 60. Gerd Lüdemann (*Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989], p. 47), accepts Wilckens's partitioning of the formula but returns to Harnack's proposal of a James-Cephas rivalry as the *Sitz-im-Leben* of vv. 5 and 7.

40. Werner Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God*, SBT 56 (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, 1966), 19n9; Conzelmann, *Commentary*, 254–55.

41. Murphy-O'Connor, "Tradition and Redaction," p. 589.

42. P. J. Kearney, "He Appeared to 500 Brothers (I. Cor. XV 6)," *NovTest* 22 (1980): 264–84.

43. Peter Stuhlmacher, *Das paulinische Evangelium: I. Vorgeschichte*, FRLANT 95 (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck und Ruprecht, 1968), p. 274—as summarized by John S. Kloppenborg, "An Analysis of the Pre-Pauline Formula in 1 Cor. 15:3b–5 in Light of Some Recent Literature," *CBQ* 40 (1978): 359.

44. C. H. Dodd, "The Appearances of the Risen Lord," in *More New Testament Studies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 125.

45. C. F. Evans (*Resurrection and the New Testament* [Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, 1970], p. 43) observes, "The suggestion of B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript* (1961), p. 299, that since the other apostles had accepted Paul, his name could have stood in the traditional formula, is scarcely feasible."

46. Evans, *Resurrection*, pp. 50–51.

47. Rudolf Bultmann, "Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*," in idem., *Faith and Understanding*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 83.

48. Wilckens, *Resurrection*, p. 13: "These are 'legitimation formulae,' that is, the appearances are kept embodied in the tradition because they are seen as demonstrating that the leaders of primitive Christianity received their legitimation, their mandate, their vocation and calling, and their position of full power and authority, from Heaven." Marxsen's view, though put slightly differently, seems to amount to about the same thing: The intention of the list of appearances "is to trace back the later functions and the later faith of the church, as well as the later leadership of James, to the one single root: the appearance of Jesus . . . Paul wants to include himself in the group. He wants to say that he too belongs to the very same circle." (*The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], p. 95). Lüdemann's view is still a variation on Wilckens's at this point. Lüdemann thinks that in reproducing the list Paul is trying to vindicate his apostolic authority in rebuttal to his detractors in the Cephas party by demonstrating that he holds the same credentials as Cephas, just as he does in 9:1 (*Opposition to Paul*, p. 72). However, there seems to be some ambiguity in Lüdemann's opinion as to Paul's intentions in using the list of appearances. He can say on the one hand that "the object of Paul's proof by means of the witnesses was Paul's apostleship, and not the resurrection of Jesus" (ibid., p. 72), and on the other that "The formulae in vv. 5 and 7 . . . are now used by Paul to testify precisely to the fact of the appearances" (ibid., p. 51).

49. Ronald J. Sider, "St. Paul's Understanding of the Nature and Significance of the Resurrection in I Corinthians XV," *NovTest* 19 (1977): 129.

50. E. L. Allen, "The Lost Kerygma," *NTS* 3 (1956–57): 350.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid., p. 353.

53. C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 342.

54. S. M. Gilmour traces the history of the theory and shows that it was Weisse who originated it, not E. von Dobschütz, as one often hears ("The Christophany to More Than Five Hundred Brethren," *JBL* 80 [1961]).

55. Fuller, *Formation*, p. 36.

56. Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, pp. 103, 106. Gilmour ("Easter and Pentecost," *JBL* 81 [1962]) tries to rehabilitate the theory; but despite a few interesting insights, he really fails to make a convincing case—as C. Freeman Sleeper shows ("Pentecost and Resurrection," *JBL* 84 [1965]). Stephen J. Patterson ("1 Cor. 15:3–11 and the Origin of the Resurrection and Appearance Tradition," *Westar Institute Seminar Papers* [March 1–5, 1995]: 22–23) puts forth a softer version of the argument, suggesting that the reference to the 500 indirectly reflects mob glossolalic ecstasy like that stylized in Acts 2. In this case, to have "seen" the Risen Lord would, for the 500 brethren, have meant seeing his power active among them in the form of tongue-speaking and prophecy. This is not much of a resurrection appearance in my opinion, or rather perhaps a demythologization of one.

57. Dodd, "Appearances," p. 127.

58. Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 103.

59. See Käte Hamburger, *The Logic of Literature*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 136.

60. We find a striking parallel, which serves to demonstrate the point of an apocryphal appeal to eyewitnesses who are in reality no longer available to the doubter, in the late Syriac hagiography *The History of John the Son of Zebedee*, where that worthy is preaching to the Ephesians the miracles of his Lord: he "raised the daughter of Jairus, the chief of the synagogue, after she was dead, and, lo, she abideth, with her father in Decapolis, and if thou choosest to go, thou mayest learn (it) from her" (W. Wright, *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, Edited from Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum and Other Libraries*, vol. 2, *The English Translation* [London: Williams and Norgate, 1871], p. 15). Perhaps she may have remained until the time of John's ministry, but she must have been long dead by the time *The History of John the Son of Zebedee* was composed. Even so, all the post-Pauline scribe meant by contributing the appearance to the 500 was that, had you lived in Paul's day (as he knew quite well that his own readers did not), then you could have verified the matter. (Cf. John 20:26–31.)

61. *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924; reprint 1972), pp. 3–4.

62. George Eldon Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 105: "It is highly probable that it is this experience which made James a believer." Clark H. Pinnock, *Set Forth Your Case* (Chicago: Moody, 1978), p. 98: "James had formerly been skeptical (John 7:5) but after a resurrection appearance (1 Cor. 15:7) took the helm of the mother church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13; Gal. 1:19)." Frank Morison, *Who Moved the Stone?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), chapter 11, "The Evidence of the Prisoner's Brother."

63. J. Weiss (*History of Primitive Christianity*, 1:25): "But it is a fact of importance, his-

torically, that James had such an experience, uniquely and individually. For it was no doubt a distinction which was used to support his later position as head of the community." Raymond E. Brown (*The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus* [Paramus, NJ: Paulist, 1973], p. 95): "One must probably postulate an appearance of James to account for the fact that a disbelieving brother of the Lord became a leading Christian." Gerd Lüdemann (*The Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 109): ". . . this individual vision . . . represents a kind of conversion of James."

64. Abdulaziz Abdulhussein Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism: The Idea of the Mahdi in Twelver Shi'ism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), pp. 6–7; Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 39.

65. Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 175; Sachedina, *Messianism,* p. 6; but see W. M. Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1979), p. 23.

66. Sachedina, *Messianism,* p. 22.

67. Cited by Eusebius, *EH* 2, 23:4–9. Some of this material, however, may be Eusebius's own interpretation: see R. M. Grant, *Eusebius as Church Historian*, pp. 67–70; and W. Pratschr, *Der Herrenbruder Jakobus und die Jakobustradition,* pp. 107–21; 191–93.

68. Fuller, *Formation*, 12.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. This, of course, is the reading of Theodore J. Weeden (*Mark: Traditions in Conflict* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971]), already anticipated, as I read it, in Robert M. Grant, *The Earliest Lives of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), pp. 7–8.

72. Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist, 1979), pp. 84–87. Vielhauer, 352, compares the Peter-Beloved Disciple rivalry in John to that existing at Corinth between Cephas and Paul.

73. Fuller, *Formation*, pp. 12–13.

74. Ibid., p. 28; Hans von Campenhausen, "The Events of Easter and the Empty Tomb," in *Tradition and Life in the Church, Essays and Lectures in Church History* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), p. 44; Gerald O'Collins, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1973), p. 5.

75. E. F. F. Bishop, "The Risen Christ and the Five Hundred Brethren (1 Cor. 15,6)," *CBQ* 18 (1956): 341–44.

76. Conzelmann, *Commentary*, p. 252.

77. Fee (*Corinthians*, p. 729), Wilckens, Lietzmann, Conzelmann (*Commentary*, p. 258) and others.

78. Walter Schmithals makes a case for this view in *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church* (New York: Abingdon, 1969), pp. 67–87.

79. Paul Winter, "I Corinthians XV: 3b–7," *Nov.Test.* 2 (1957): 148–49.

80. Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul*, p. 49; cf. also idem, *Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 37.

81. *Corinthians*, p. 729.

82. Schmithals, *Office of the Apostle*, p. 74 (emphasis mine).

83. Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul*, p. 50.

84. Dodd, "Appearances," p. 125.

85. Winter, "I Corinthians XV," pp. 148–49; Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul*, p. 50.

86. Ethelbert Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story* (New York: Knopf, 1974), pp. 148–49.

87. "Appearances," p. 125.

88. Patterson, "1 Cor. 15:3–11," p. 7.

89. See Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead* (New York: Revell, 1933), p. 132; Marxsen, *Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 95; Philipp Vielhauer, "Paul and the Cephas Party in Corinth," *JHC* 1 (Fall 1994): 129–42, esp. p. 140 (German original = "Paulus und die Cephaspartei in Korinth," *NTS* 21 [1975]: 341–52, esp. p. 351). Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus, An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Seabury, 1979), pp. 348–49: "He is providing a list of authorities who all say the same thing." In light of v. 11, the catholicizing intent is plain if Paul wrote it; but even if v. 11 represents an early interpretation by someone else, the catholicizing dimension seems implicit in the wide range of witnesses cited.

90. Hans Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1956), p. 97.

91. Philipp Vielhauer, "Cephas Party."

92. Ibid., p. 131.

93. W. C. van Manen, "Paul," in *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1914), col. 3629.

94. Bultmann, "Karl Barth," pp. 83–84.

95. Evans, *Resurrection*, p. 46.

96. Conzelmann, *Commentary*, p. 249 and n11. Conzelmann then offers the traditional explanation: "Looking back, we can then see how vv. 12ff. were prepared for by vv. 1–11: the foundation is the traditional confession of faith" (249). But we saw above that the material in vv. 3–11 can hardly be understood as a traditional "confession of faith."

97. Schillebeeckx, *Experiment in Christology*, p. 348. Lüdemann (*Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 34) attempts a harmonization at this point, trying to make the complex argument of vv. 13ff the natural continuation of the appearance list. He suggests that Paul placed the list before the ensuing argument so as to prove his authority for the rather controversial notions he is about to propose. But this belies the tenor of the argument through the rest of the chapter, which is a diatribe seeking to win over its reader by reason and rhetoric (cf. Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990], pp. 56–59), not by pulling apostolic rank in an apodictic fashion. The argument of chapter 15 stands by itself as a "Treatise on the Resurrection," reminiscent of similar writings by Philo and the Writer to Rheginos. Lüdemann's proposed linkage is so artificial as to make the unnaturalness of the juxtaposition all the more stark.

98. Though she does not elaborate on her reasons, it is worth noting that Winsome Munro "suspects" 1 Cor. 15:1–11 of belonging to a subsequent, post-Pauline stratum of the epistle (*Authority in Paul and Peter: The Identification of a Pastoral Stratum in the Pauline Corpus and 1 Peter*, SNTSMS 45 [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983], p. 204). J. C. O'Neill also deems it most probable that "1 Cor. 15.1–11 is a later credal summary not written by Paul" (*The Recovery of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* [London: SPCK, 1972], p. 27).

99. Munro, "Interpolation," pp. 432–39.
100. Walker, "Burden of Proof," p. 615.
101. Munro, "Interpolation," p. 432.
102. Walker, "Text-critical Evidence," p. 627.
103. *Corinthians*, 717n16.
104. William Lane Craig and Robert M. Price, *The Craig-Price Debate: Did Jesus Rise From the Dead?* Audiocassette. Ohio State: Ohio State University Veritas Forum, 1999.

5

THE SPIRITUAL BODY OF CHRIST AND THE LEGEND OF THE EMPTY TOMB

RICHARD C. CARRIER

PART I: THE SPIRITUAL BODY OF CHRIST

1. INTRODUCTION

Christianity probably began, and was taken up and preached by Paul the Apostle, with a different idea of the resurrection than is claimed today. The evidence suggests the first Christians, at least up to and including Paul, thought Christ's "soul" was taken up to heaven and clothed in a new body, after leaving his old body in the grave forever. The subsequent story, that Jesus actually walked out of the grave with the same body that went into it, leaving an empty tomb to astonish all, was probably a legend that developed over the course of the first century, beginning with a metaphorical "empty tomb" in the Gospel of Mark, most likely written after Paul's death. By the end of the first century the Christian faction that would win total power three centuries later, and thus alone preserve its writings for posterity, had come to believe in the literal truth of the ensuing legend, forgetting or repudiating the original doctrine of Paul.

If this theory of events is correct, then the Christian religion did not begin with an empty tomb or physical encounters with the risen Christ. Rather, it began with visions, dreams, and interpretations of scripture and, possibly,

things Jesus was believed to have said, which all converged to inspire a belief that Christ's being had ascended to heaven and been granted, in advance of everyone, that new glorious body of the promised resurrection. There could not have been any physical evidence to back up this claim, which is why none is ever mentioned by Paul or indeed in any of the epistles. It had to be taken on faith. At most, one could be persuaded to believe it through an analysis of scripture, and the sworn testimony of men like Paul who claimed to have encountered the risen Jesus in a spiritual epiphany. This makes the most sense of the fact that these two things are the only evidence Paul ever appeals to in persuading his fellow Christians to remain in the fold. It also makes more sense of the exact language Paul employs, and of certain peculiarities in the Gospel tradition itself.

So I have two points to prove: first, that the original Christian belief probably involved a two-body doctrine of the resurrection, where the identity of Jesus was believed to have left one body to enter another; and second, that the subsequent Gospel accounts, polemically emphasizing a physical raising of a flesh-and-blood corpse, probably represent a legendary development from that original belief. Before proceeding to a demonstration of these points, two qualifications are necessary. First, the view I will defend in this chapter is compatible with both historicist and ahistoricist interpretations of the life of Jesus. Whether there was ever a real Jesus or an earthly ministry, whether there was really a charismatic Jew of that name executed by Pilate and buried on earth, does not matter for my analysis, though for simplicity's sake I will assume this as the more probable hypothesis.[1] Second, and more importantly, I am not saying the resurrected Christ was believed to be a 'disembodied spirit,' or that his resurrection was just an 'idea' (as in "he is still with us in spirit"). To the contrary, I argue that he was believed to have received a new, more glorious body, one not made of flesh and blood but of the stuff of the stars, that his soul or identity left its old body on earth and was given another in heaven.[2] So the earliest Christians would have believed Christ had *really* been raised, and raised *bodily*, even as his earthly body continued to rot in its tomb. I will also argue that the claim that his tomb was empty, and his corpse missing, arose a generation or two later.[3] But in the original belief, the entombed body was a mere husk: the true identity or soul of Christ resided elsewhere, in a new celestial body, just like the one the faithful would all receive at the end of the age, when they, too, would be whisked up into the sky to live with God, where no flesh can go.

2. THE HEADY DAYS OF JEWISH DIVERSITY

I must first demonstrate that such a novel idea as a two-body doctrine was plausible in early Judaism, of which Christianity was a new sect, not a distinct religion.[4] If my theory is correct, such a belief must have been attractive to at least some Jews of the day. Yet it is a common sentiment among modern defenders of Christ's resurrection 'in the flesh' that the Jews of the early first century were somehow too monolithic and closed-minded to invent or introduce any novel ideas. Perhaps the inherently racist nature of such a claim escapes them. But a typical example comes from J. A. T. Robinson, who says "it would have been inconceivable for a Jew to think of resurrection except in bodily terms. . . . The notion that a man might be 'spiritually' raised while his body lay on in the tomb, would have seemed to the Jew an absurdity."[5] Other examples include Oscar Cullmann, who argues that, for Jews, "the death of the body is *also* destruction of God-created life" such that the condition of disembodied souls "cannot be described as life" in their view.[6] Or Anthony Harvey: "There is no evidence that the Greek conception of survival in the form of a disembodied soul ever penetrated the Jewish mentality."[7] Or Edward Bode: "Jewish mentality would never have accepted a division of two bodies, one in the tomb and another in a risen life."[8]

All this is, of course, ridiculous. Already in the Old Testament the idea of a disembodied life separate from one's body is well-established.[9] And at least one Jewish text imagines two bodies for Moses, one in a grave and one in heaven, claiming that "when Moses was taken up to heaven, Joshua saw him twice: one Moses with the angels, and one on the mountains, honored with burial in the ravines."[10] The commonly touted idea that the Jews only believed in an "all-at-once" resurrection, and not a resurrection in stages, is also false—even conservative Jews believed Adam would be raised first (and, as we shall see, early Christians saw Jesus as the eschatological Adam).[11] Moreover, it was precisely in the early first century that Judaism was at its most diverse, with numerous sects, many with a wildly different theology, proving the Jews were quite capable and completely willing to invent or introduce all kinds of novel ideas. There was no single 'Jewish' mindset. Rather, there was a colorful continuum of ideologies, some more clearly receptive of Hellenic and Persian influences than others.[12] There was even diversity and debate *within* each sect. And when we examine the evidence for

these various branches of Judaism, we find that the claims made by apologists like Robinson are outright false. As one leading expert puts it, they assume "a unitary Jewish view which is a pure fiction," for "the evidence indicates that in the intertestamental period there was no single Jewish orthodoxy on the time, mode, and place of resurrection, immortality," or "eternal life."[13]

He is right. We know the names of what may be more than thirty Jewish sects that competed for influence in the time of Jesus. This is often obscured by the fact that only one sect, a branch of the Pharisees, who had always dominated the courts and held the widest influence, rose to sole dominance over most of Palestine and the Diaspora after the Jewish War (66–70 CE), and most extant Judaica (such as the Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, etc.) derives from only that sect. We thus cannot claim that what such texts say represented the opinion of all Jews before the war. We know for a fact it very definitely did not. Indeed, the Pharisees were the one sect against which the Christian sect was most opposed, and least like.[14] Yet Robinson and his ilk derive their absolutist notion of Jewish resurrection dogma from the Pharisaic literature. It is wildly inappropriate to attribute to the original Christians ideas only found advocated by their *enemies*. We should look elsewhere for Christian affinities, if we are to understand the origins of that novel sect.

Here is a summary of the known sects of pre-war Judaism:

The **Pharisees** held adamantly to a belief in the literal resurrection of the body, but also incorporated a Hellenic-Babylonian astrology into their belief-system.[15] In contrast, the **Sadducees** denied any kind of resurrection altogether, denying even the existence of spirits, angels, or souls, and they denied the entire concept of fate in favor of a doctrine of chance and free will.[16] The **Scribes** often mentioned in the Gospels were also a distinct sect, closely allied with the Pharisees but diverging from them in certain ritual observances and practices.[17] There were also the **Hemerobaptists**, the sect of John the Baptist, which clung to the idea of a baptismal 'washing away' of sin. They accepted resurrection of the body but (Epiphanius claims) denied the existence of spirits or angels.[18] Then there were the **Nasaraeans**, a Jewish sect so radical they rejected the *entire* Torah, but accepted the existence and authority of the Patriarchs, relying on a different written law.[19] There were the **Ossaeans**, who also rejected the Torah, yet worshipped their own heavenly Christ figure even before Christians came along, and defied Pharisaic legalism

by allowing members to escape persecution by feigning idol worship if necessary.[20] Incredibly, there was even a sect called the **Herodians**, who appear to have believed Herod the Great was the Christ.[21] We also know of the **Therapeutae**, a Jewish group who developed a kind of New Age monasticism in Egypt, treating the entire Old Testament as symbolic allegory.[22]

Besides all those sects, we know of the **Bana'im**, who had exceedingly strict rules of cleanliness; the **Hypsistarians**, who fused a pious Diaspora Yahwehism with a kind of star cult in the Bosporus and Asia Minor; and the **Maghariya**, a strict Jewish sect that nevertheless adopted a kind of proto-Manichaean view that God could not have created something so base as the material world and therefore an interceding angel accomplished it at God's behest, so that most of the Old Testament refers to the activities of this angel, not the one true God.[23] We also hear of sects called the **Masbotheans** and the **Galilaeans**.[24] It also appears that the **Qumran Sect** was another variety of Judaism all its own, rejecting every other, and adopting a spiritual dualism much akin to the Persian belief in a war between forces of light and darkness.[25]

Samaritans were Jews, too, a fact often overlooked.[26] They simply rejected the Mishnah (oral law) and the legitimacy of the temple cult, as well as every holy text except the Pentateuch, of which they had their own version. Plus they had a few texts of their own, such as chronicles and liturgical writings. They, too, had a developed Christology before the rise of Christianity, centering on Moses as the Christ, conceived as an exalted heavenly savior and intermediary between man and God. The Samaritans were apparently split into four sects, one of which (at least according to Epiphanius) was the **Essenes**.[27] The others were the **Dositheans**,[28] the **Sebuaeans**,[29] and the **Gorothenes**.[30] All of these, except possibly the Dositheans, denied the resurrection of the body but, unlike Sadducees, accepted the existence of spirits and angels. But they split on many other issues, especially the dating of festivals.[31]

That completes our survey of the rich diversity of views within early first-century Judaism. Thirty-two sects are known by name, and at least four more by description. There may be overlap, some groups sharing multiple names, but even at the most conservative we can identify no less than ten clearly distinct sects, some of which we know almost nothing about. How many more might there have been whose names were not preserved? But even from those we know something about, the first thing that should be clear is that it is vain to argue what Jews would or would not find palatable

in any variant of their faith. If they could readily accept beliefs as seemingly contrary to Judaism as we see many sects did, then it is absurd to say they would not accept a two-body resurrection doctrine. That would be far less strange than rejecting the Torah, crediting an angel with the creation, worshipping Moses as Christ, permitting obeisance to idols, practicing astrology, accepting baptism as an atonement for sins, rejecting a literal interpretation of the scriptures, scorning the Jerusalem Temple, believing Herod was the Messiah, denying the existence of souls or angels or spirits of any kind, or denying the resurrection altogether. Clearly, the Jews of that era were ready and willing to believe a great many things seemingly contrary to what we think of Judaism today, things diametrically opposed to what the Pharisees held to be essential.

3. THE TWO-BODY DOCTRINE IN PHILO AND JOSEPHUS

This vast diversity in Jewish ideology establishes the possibility, but the existence of a two-body doctrine can be demonstrated specifically. First, we know the concept of a purely spiritual 'salvation' (the soul lives forever in paradise, or sometimes in hell, without a body) was held by many Jews in the time of Christ. This is proven directly by Jubilees 23–25 and a redaction in 1 Enoch (92–105), as well as other Jewish apocrypha.[32] Even the Pharisees conceived of souls separable from the body that wait for the body to decay, then go to heaven or hell, even raise complaints with angels about where they ended up, or hold conversations with the living, all before the general Resurrection even happens.[33] It is a very small step to go from that to an idea of the departed soul becoming or being clothed in an entirely new body. And we have indications of just such a view in two prominent Jewish writers: Philo and Josephus.

Philo says that "salvation" (*sôtêria*) requires abandoning the body, "because the body took its substance from the earth, and is again dissolved into the earth, as Moses is witness to when he says 'You are earth, and to earth you will return,'" citing Genesis 3:19 ("you are dust, and to dust you shall return"), then arguing that whatever is assembled must be dissolved in the end.[34] He concludes with an admonition to his readers, "And so depart from the earthly stuff that surrounds you, escape, oh fellow, from that abominable prison-house the body!"[35] Because some people, Philo says, "make a truce

with the body until the end, and then are buried in it, like an urn or coffin or whatever else you like to call it," but if any portion of their soul remains virtuous at death, that portion will be saved from oblivion, while everything corruptible (the body, and any part of the soul tainted by, or still clinging to the body) rots away.[36] Indeed, even living bodies Philo calls "corpses," since they are already dead, because only the soul can aspire to life.[37] Hence "the wise man does not seek a grave, for the body is already the grave of the soul, in which it is buried as if in a grave." Instead, the wise man only seeks "possession" of this grave of the body, to be master over it while he lives on earth.[38]

In the end, the body, according to Philo, will dissolve into the four elements of which it was made, "but the mental and celestial species of the soul will depart into the purest ether," which he says is a fifth substance superior to the other four of which the body is made, and this 'ether' is the stuff of which "the stars and the whole of heaven" are made, as well as the human soul.[39] And so "the mind is released from its evil bond, the body," and "goes forth and exchanges its state not only for salvation and freedom but also" for possessions like virtue and wisdom.[40] In fact, because of its "incorruptibility" the soul:

> Removes its habitation from the mortal body and returns as if to the mother-city, from which it originally moved its habitation to this place. For when it is said to a dying person "Thou shalt go to thy fathers," what else is this than to represent another life without the body, which only the soul of the wise man ought to live?[41]

> For does not every wise soul live like an immigrant and sojourner in this mortal body, having (as its real) dwelling-place and country the most pure substance of heaven, from which (our) nature migrated to this (place) by a law of necessity?[42]

In accord with this, Philo regards angels as "mental souls," pure minds, which are 'wholly' incorporeal,[43] yet whose "substance" is "spiritual." Because of this, they can take the "form" of men to procreate with women.[44] So, although 'bodiless,' they still have substance, and thus in a sense a different kind of 'body.'

We see here that one prominent Jewish intellectual, who lived at the very same time as Jesus and Paul, believed in a purely spiritual salvation,

rejecting any idea that the body would ever be raised or live forever. And his view comes very close to a two-body doctrine—for it can be described that way: the soul is in effect its own body, made of 'ether,' but at birth this body is sent into the earthly body that is subject to death and decay. Then, at death, if a man has been sufficiently virtuous (by living in the Law of God), this 'soulish' body will be disentangled from the fleshly body and ascend to heaven to eternal life. The idea of the afterlife being an eternal spiritual abode in heaven with God and his angels, rather than on earth, is found in Philo and some Essene or other Jewish apocrypha.[45] And since heaven was celestial, anyone who lived there had to be celestial, too, leaving behind all earthly substance.

This view is very similar to what Josephus reports to be held by some Essene sects. On the Essenes he writes:

> For this particular doctrine is strong among them: bodies are subject to corruption and their material is not permanent, but souls are immortal and persist forever. Descending from the thinnest ether they are merged with bodies just like prisons, having been drawn down by some natural spell. But whenever they are released from the bonds of the flesh, as if released from a long slavery, then they rejoice and are carried skyward.[46]

The language here is very similar to Philo's, who exhibits a strong admiration for the Essenes, and a similar sect he calls the Therapeutae, so the similarity in soteriology is perhaps thus explained. This also permits the safe conclusion that the Essene sect that Josephus describes believed in a system of salvation similar to Philo's, and may have conceived of a two-body doctrine.

And so it is that we can also find in Josephus—who claims to have been a Pharisee himself—a fusion between the Philonic and the later Rabbinic theology of bodily resurrection, in an explicit formulation of a two-body doctrine. "The Pharisees say," according to him, that "though every soul is incorruptible, only that of good men crosses over into another body, while that of bad men is punished by eternal retribution."[47] Josephus could not be any clearer: he says that in the resurrection our soul will "cross over" (*metabainein*) into "a *different* body" (*eis heteron sôma*). Though such an idea would be suppressed in later Rabbinic thought, it is clear here that some Pharisees in the first century believed in a two-body doctrine of the resurrection. Josephus certainly did.

In his own speech to his colleagues against suicide, Josephus asserts his personal view of the resurrection:

> The bodies of all men are indeed mortal, and are created out of corruptible matter, but the soul is forever immortal, and is a part of God that inhabits our bodies. . . . Don't you know that those who exit this life according to the law of nature, and pay that debt received from God, when he that gave it wants it back again . . . then the souls that remain pure and obedient obtain from God the holiest place in heaven, and from there, after the completion of the ages, they are instead sent again into undefiled bodies.[48]

Again, Josephus clearly asserts that in the resurrection we will get *new* bodies, not the same "corruptible" ones we once had. The specific phrase is *hagnois palin antenoikizontai sômasin*. A hagnic object is one that is "pure, chaste, holy," as in unpolluted, or "undefiled," hence brand new, pristine, while *antenoikizô* means literally "insert instead," to introduce as *new* inhabitants, from *anti-* (instead, in the place of) and *enoikizo* (settle in, inhabit). Such an unusual choice of vocabulary conspires to emphasize the point: mortal bodies die and perish, but in the resurrection our souls will be given new bodies to inhabit—presumably better ones. Thus, Josephus says elsewhere that for the righteous, "God has granted that they be created *again* and get a better life after the revolution."[49]

It thus cannot be doubted that a two-body doctrine was feasible and even attractive to some first-century Jews, even Pharisees. Besides Josephus, consider the view of Rabbi Mari that "Even the righteous are fated to be dust, for it is written, 'and the dust return to the earth as it was,'" quoting Ecclesiastes 12:7 ("the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it"), reflecting very closely what Josephus and Philo say. This is 'refuted' in the Talmud by a legendary conversation with a dead man. But the important thing is that Mari is not a Sadducee (they get special attention in a following passage), but one of the quotable sages of the Pharisaic tradition.[50] Thus, there *were* Pharisees besides Josephus who denied a resurrection in the flesh. Since denial of resurrection altogether would make Mari a heretic, and he is clearly not treated as such in the Talmud, we can infer that he believed in a different *kind* of resurrection, probably something like that described by Philo or Josephus, as we can see from the fact that Mari quotes a passage in Ecclesiastes that could support something akin to 'spiritual' resurrection.

4. PAUL AND THE PHARISEES

From the Rabbinical material we have ample evidence of how at least one sect of the Pharisees dealt with those who doubted the resurrection.[51] There are three general types of attack that keep recurring in the sources, requiring an answer: those that challenge the claim that the resurrection can be deduced from scripture, those that challenge whether God can even accomplish such a thing, and those that challenge the idea of resurrection with questions about what form it will take.[52] The first kind of argument is answered with copious citations and exegesis of biblical passages. The second is answered with analogies from observed facts. And the third is answered with a clever harmonizing of details in resurrection doctrine. The first type of argument is the most frequent.[53] The second type is exemplified by a passage in the Talmud: "An emperor said to Rabban Gamaliel: 'You maintain that the dead will revive, but they turn to dust, and can dust come to life?'" The Rabbis answer him with analogies involving claymolding and glassmaking, then the spontaneous generation of moles and snails, then with an argument that the soul and body must be reunited so they can be judged together.[54] In every case, the challenge can only be answered by proving resurrection possible with logical argument and evidence from the natural and human world.

It is the third type of argument that will interest us most. There are several important examples to explore. The Talmud reports that someone asked "But when they arise, shall they arise nude or in their garments?" to which the Rabbis replied "You may deduce" an answer "by an *a fortiori* argument from a wheat grain: if a grain of wheat, which is buried naked, sprouts forth in many robes, how much more so the righteous, who are buried in their raiment!"[55] But the Pharisees debated this point, as we see in a Midrash on Genesis: "Rabbi Hezekiah maintained: Not as a man goes does he come. It is the view of the Rabbis, however, that as a man goes so will he come back," the question being how the raised shall be clothed: with what they are buried in, or with new raiment.[56] A different problem arises in the Talmud, where Rabbi Lakish asks how to reconcile two contradictory passages: Jeremiah 31:8 ("I will gather them . . . with the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together") and Isaiah 35:6 ("Then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing"). The answer: "They shall rise with their defects and *then* be healed."[57]

A Midrash repeats the idea "as a generation passes away so it comes" (at the Resurrection), and applies it to this problem of how the dead shall come back:

> If one dies lame or blind he comes lame or blind, so that people shall not say, "Those He allowed to die are different from those He restored to life." For it is written, "I kill and I make alive." Having declared that He performs the more difficult act, He then declares that He performs the easier act! For "I kill and I make alive" is the harder act, so how much more is it with the easier act, viz. "I wound and I heal." But [the meaning is]: I raise them [from the grave] with their blemishes . . . then will I heal them [after Resurrection].[58]

The same solution is then applied in a different way: "the distinction which [God] made between the celestial creatures and the terrestrial, viz. that the former endure while the latter die, holds good only in this world, but in the Messianic future there will be no death at all,"[59] proving that this dichotomy, expressed by Philo and Josephus, was well known among the Pharisees, so much so that they incorporated it into their theology, and then developed a doctrine to resolve it. Josephus might have agreed with their response, since it is not clear what exactly he envisioned for the new world, or our new bodies. But Philo clearly resolved things differently.

In all cases the Rabbis envision the resurrected body as hardly any different than it ever was. What changes are what we might call the 'laws of nature': the raised live forever because death itself is abolished, not because our bodies are redesigned to escape it. The only clear example of the body actually being any different is the belief that we will be given "wings like eagles," in order to reconcile the resurrection doctrine with the apocalyptic belief that the earth will be destroyed.[60] But in general it is not the body that changes, but the rules. Thus, the same passage, when asking whether we would suffer pain or fatigue (and by extension, injury) after the resurrection, answers that "the Lord shall renew their strength." In other words, our bodies won't change in any fundamental sense (beyond the granting of wings, apparently), but God will act to preserve them, unlike now.

This is made clear by what follows: some Rabbis then ask how we can conclude this, when those resurrected by Ezekiel did not become immortal or free of pain, and so forth.[61] The response? That never really happened, it

was "just a parable," a metaphor for the salvation of Israel. It is significant that the response is *not* that the resurrection is fundamentally different from "resuscitation," it is *not* that "in the resurrection" our bodies will be changed, in a way it was not for those Ezekiel raised. Rather, the response is to dismiss Ezekiel's miracle as a myth, however meaningful. Some Rabbis then offer "proof" that the story is actually true, debate who it was he raised, and then relate the legend itself. But at no point is it ever said that what he did was any different than what God will do at the end of the world. To the contrary, when the Talmud then gets to a discussion of the resurrections performed by Elijah, they say God gave him the "key of resurrection," one of the three great keys of God's power (the others being of birth and rain), the very same key God will presumably use at the end of the world. So the variety of Pharisaism that survives in these texts apparently did not conceive of the general resurrection differently than any other raising of the dead.[62] Instead, the way God will *rule* the new world will be different.

Now we turn to Paul. The writings of Paul are representative of the earliest views of Christians that we have access to, ideologically as close to the origin of the faith as we will ever get. Paul was well-educated, and claims, like Josephus, to have been a Pharisee, though unlike Josephus (but like Philo), he comes from the Diaspora.[63] So we can be sure he knew of the kinds of arguments and responses surveyed above, and that he knew all about popular pagan beliefs as well. We must admit, of course, that though Paul had been a Pharisee when he opposed Christianity, he had certainly abandoned that sect upon his conversion, and with it most of its dogmas, such as circumcision, oral law, and even much of the Mosaic law.[64] Abandoning these was a far more serious breach of faith and tradition for a Pharisee than adopting a two-body resurrection doctrine (which as we have seen was already acceptable to at least some Pharisees). It follows that we cannot base our expectations of what Paul would have believed *as a Christian* on what we think Pharisees would have found acceptable. Nevertheless, Paul would have been thoroughly familiar with Pharisaic doctrines and would have drawn from this well of knowledge wherever he agreed with it.

Yet when Paul comes up against opposition to belief in the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, he does not employ anything even remotely akin to the known Pharisaic defenses of the resurrection. He never cites any of their scriptural 'proof-texts'.[65] Instead, he cites only three scriptural passages in

reference to the resurrection,[66] none of which pertains to the raising of bodies, unlike many of the texts cited by the Rabbis.[67] In fact, the passages he cites barely have anything to do with resurrection *per se*, and he doesn't really use them to prove his doctrine so much as elucidate it. So we can conclude that the Corinthians were not objecting to the scriptural basis for belief in the resurrection. If they were, Paul would have answered in kind. We can also conclude that, whatever doctrine Paul was espousing, scripture provided scant assistance in proving it. If, for example, he meant that our bodies would be reformed from the dirt into which they had dissolved, he would surely have cited passages supporting such a view (like Daniel 12:2, Isaiah 26:19, and Ezekiel 37:5–10), and used the familiar Pharisaic analogies (like clayworking or glassmaking). But he didn't.[68]

Were the Corinthians, then, objecting to whether resurrection was *possible*? That does not seem likely, either. Paul assumes throughout his letter that the Corinthians accept that all things are possible for God. Hence he does not bother to defend this point, but merely asserts it, and unlike the Pharisaic situations above, he does not present any logical arguments or analogies to show that resurrection is *possible*. Instead, he spends the first half of his time arguing only, in effect, "the resurrection must be true or else we're screwed."[69] That it is possible is never doubted. That leaves only one argument: the Corinthians he is arguing against must have doubted the resurrection because of some question about *how* the resurrection would happen, along the lines of the sort of arguments we saw above (e.g., whether the dead would arise with their blemishes and wounds, how they would be clothed, etc.). And this does appear to be the one thing Paul explicitly acknowledges, rhetorically 'quoting' some of the Corinthians themselves when he says, "But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?'"[70]

This, then, must be the crux of the issue. And so we can compare Paul's response to this challenge with the known Pharisaic response. But now a stark contrast comes into view. For Paul does not respond in any way even remotely like the Pharisees. While the Rabbinic responses all emphasize the continuity of the body, even to the point of keeping blemishes and wounds, debating whether the grave clothes would be restored with the body, and arguing that the body and soul *must* be reunited so they can both be judged together, Paul goes out of his way to *deny* continuity, emphasizing instead

how *different* the resurrected body will be.[71] The issue of clothing and wounds is thus entirely bypassed, and there is certainly no insistence upon or even mention of 'reuniting' the soul and body for judgment.

This is particularly clear in three details. First, while the Pharisees resolve the incorruptible-celestial versus corruptible-terrestrial dichotomy by asserting that the distinction will be removed at the resurrection, Paul insists it will be maintained, and thus 'gets around' the problem in a completely different way: by giving us new celestial bodies.[72] Hence, 1 Corinthians 15:54 contains a direct analogy with the Rabbinic solution of the celestial-terrestrial dichotomy. But when we compare it with the Rabbinical text, we see that death will be defeated, according to the Rabbis, when God changes the nature of the universe to accommodate our bodies, but according to Paul, when God changes our bodies to accommodate the nature of the universe. So the solution is entirely reversed. Second, while the Pharisees were bothered by the problem of continuity so much that almost any hint of our bodies being different would challenge their entire belief in the resurrection (as quoted above: "If one dies lame or blind he comes lame or blind, so that people shall not say, 'Those He allowed to die are different from those He restored to life'"), Paul is not bothered by this at all, but even makes fundamental differences in the raised body *essential* to his doctrine, exactly the opposite of the Rabbinical approach. So, finally, when Paul resorts to the very same Pharisaic analogy of a naked grain of wheat,[73] unlike the Pharisees he does not see this as predicting that our bodies will be clothed in glory like the wheat sprout, but as predicting that we will be given *entirely new bodies*. To this point we now turn.

5. PAUL ON THE RESURRECTION BODY

We have established that Paul did not hold to the resurrection doctrine of a Rabbinical Pharisee, but something substantially different, in some respects exactly the opposite. This should not be surprising, since upon conversion Paul came to regard the trappings of the Pharisees as "mere rubbish" (*skybala*).[74] Unlike a Pharisee, Paul explains, a Christian "trusts not in the flesh" (*ouk en sarki pepoithotes*). The true circumcision, for instance, is spiritual, not physical.[75] Paul sees this flesh-spirit dichotomy as a fundamental distinction between Christians and Pharisees. Naturally, he explicitly links it to Chris-

tian resurrection doctrine. In the very same place where he divorces himself from Pharisaic tradition, he concludes:

> Those whose end is destruction . . . keep their minds on earthly things. For our place of citizenship exists in the heavens, from where we also wait eagerly for a savior . . . who will change the body of our lowly state to share the same form as the body of his glory, by using the power he has even to subject all things to himself.[76]

This passage clearly connects with Paul's elaboration in 1 Corinthians 15. There, too, he explains the resurrection by appealing to God's power to subject all things to himself (vv. 25–28). There, too, he says we will trade earth for heaven (vv. 47–49).[77] There, too, he says we will be changed (vv. 51–52).

From this brief account it seems Paul has in mind the actual transformation of our old bodies into new ones, rather than exchanging one body for another, but to "change" one's bodily form can mean either, just as changing your clothes does not mean literal transformation, but exchange.[78] Accordingly, when Paul clarifies exactly what he means in 1 Corinthians 15, we find a much more precise doctrine. I propose that in light of that chapter, which I will analyze next, we can interpret the above passage as saying that God will change our 'location' into a body whose form (*schêma*, *morphê*) matches that of Christ. This is what is meant by our holding a citizenship in heaven, not on earth, and by our current body belonging to a "lowly state," which means on earth, in relation to heaven, i.e., the lowly is the earthly, which is everything that is "rubbish" and fit for "destruction," in contrast with the body of "glory" (*doxa*), which is spiritual (the entire point of Phil. ch. 3). But this interpretation rests on how we understand 1 Corinthians 15, so to that we now turn.

5.1. Establishing the Context

We must begin by understanding the context of Paul's discussion here.[79] It all begins with one central concern: "How do some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead?"[80]—a doubt that Paul implies originated with the question, "But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?'"[81] We are not told why this question led to a general skepticism of the resurrection, but it apparently did—for *some* of

the Corinthians—as we saw above. However, we can infer the reason from what Paul subsequently argues about the nature of the resurrected body, since the entire point of that is to defuse the very doubts raised by this question.[82] Through all of this, Paul emphasizes that belief in the resurrection of the dead is an essential element of the Gospel, the one thing for which they labor and risk everything,[83] and that Christ's resurrection is essential, because only that cleanses us of sin, provides the ultimate proof-by-example of our own eternal life, and ensures Christ's ultimate victory in the end.[84] Paul emphasizes that our resurrection will fundamentally resemble his.[85] So what Paul says about our resurrection body applies equally to Christ's, and at the same time answers whatever doubts the Corinthians were having about their own resurrection.

5.2. Either Two Puzzles or Two Bodies

Paul would have known everything pertinent to believing Christ's resurrection really happened: he attests to speaking with God directly, knows the primary witnesses, and attests to having spoken with them and to having visited them in Jerusalem.[86] It seems improbable Paul himself would remain a convert without checking *any* of the evidence—for if we are to suppose this, then we can hold no trust in anything Paul affirms. It is therefore peculiar that Paul only provides two kinds of evidence in support of Christ's resurrection: scripture and various epiphanies like his own roadside vision.[87] On the hypothesis that Jesus rose in the same body that died (and proved this by submitting that body to handling by disciples and eating fish, and by the very words of Jesus himself),[88] such an approach makes little sense. Too many unanswered questions arise.

How could the Corinthians have any doubt about the kind of body Jesus rose in, when they would have had such specific accounts of it? And why would Paul never once appeal to those accounts in making his case? It cannot be that the Corinthians were doubting Christ's resurrection, since Paul makes it clear that denial of his resurrection is the unforseen *consequence* of their doubts,[89] and therefore not one of the things they are actually doubting. Therefore, doubts over the metaphysical minutiae of Christ's resurrection could not have led to doubting the resurrection of everyone else. That would only be possible if the Corinthians were imagining Christ's resurrection as

somehow *different* than their own, and different in a way unique to him, such that the same difference could not (at least not obviously) apply to the rest of us. Only such a line of reasoning would make any sense of the dispute Paul is responding to. But though Paul insisits on there being no difference, he never cites any testimony, of Jesus or those who saw him raised, as to the nature of his resurrected body. This is the first puzzle.

The second puzzle is: How was Paul's elaborate answer supposed to end the dispute? If the problem were merely one of identifying how we are like Christ and thus will be raised in the same way, then that is what Paul would have argued. But he doesn't. Instead, he discourses on metaphysical minutiae, clearly aimed at resolving some misunderstanding about the nature of the resurrected body in general. Why? On the same-body hypothesis this doesn't make much sense. The response for Paul in that case would be to list the eyewitness evidence pertaining to the nature of Christ's raised body and then directly eliminate whatever 'difference' between us and him the Corinthians were stumbling over. So why does Paul respond in an entirely different way? Why does he never mention the material witness, or the particular stumbling block tripping up the Corinthians? Why does he never resort to any of the Pharisaic descriptions of continuity between the dead and the raised body, which answered the very same worry for *them*? More puzzling questions.

Now examine everything on the hypothesis that Jesus did *not* rise in the same body he died in. This resolves all the puzzles above and answers all our perplexing questions. First, Paul does not appeal to any eyewitness evidence because there is none, at least none pertaining to the nature of Christ's new body. Disciples did not handle him. He did not eat fish. All that was known firsthand is that he lives, not how. Second, the Corinthians could easily arrive at doubts about their own resurrection if Christ's body continued to rot in the grave. Certainly, this could lead some to doubt that even Christ was raised, but such people would not become Christians in the first place, or, after converting but then coming to doubt the central claim of the Gospel, they would cease to be Christians and leave the fold. This has not happened for the Corinthians Paul is writing to. They still believe Christ was raised.[90]

However, if the corpse of Jesus remained on earth, it is easy to see how some might come to believe his resurrection was peculiar, in a way ours could not be. It is possible some decided his resurrection was only metaphorical or that it was simply a necessary consequence of his divinity—just as God lived

without a body before the incarnation, so obviously he would afterward. And we are not gods, so we can't count on the same fate. Whatever their peculiar interpretation was, like these, it must have made our own resurrection somehow dubious. Only that would make any sense of Paul's reply. So now their specific worry becomes explicable: If Christ didn't get back his old body, how are we going to live without ours? Paul's answer is: We get a new body. He doesn't need to 'prove' this is what happened to Jesus, since the Corinthians already accept that, whatever is supposed to happen in 'the resurrection,' it undoubtedly happened to Jesus. So all Paul has to explain is what happens. His answer then removes the 'stumbling block,' whatever it was, by making what happened to Jesus possible for us, too.

This makes the most sense of Paul's otherwise strange but impassioned retort to the Corinthian doubters:

> You idiot! What you sow is not given life unless it dies, and what you sow, you do not sow the body that will come to be, but a naked seed, perhaps of wheat or something else. But God gives it a body just as he pleased, and to each of the seeds a body of its own.[91]

On the hypothesis that Jesus was bodily raised, why would all this talk of different bodies take center stage, even become grounds for accusing someone of being an idiot? If the Corinthians were worried about some trivial problem like how Jesus would not age or bleed to death if he had the same old body, then Paul would be calling them idiots for not understanding that God can change the nature of that same old body. Instead, he is calling them idiots for not understanding that there are *two bodies*, in effect one that ages and bleeds to death, and another, "the body that will come to be." It is a *new* body that God "gives as he pleases" to the seed that "dies," because that seed had "a body of its own," which is now dead, and so a new body is needed for the sprout.

On the hypothesis that the body of Jesus remained in the grave after he was raised, Paul's strange argument here makes complete sense. It is exactly what someone would say to assuage doubts over such a fact. In other words, 'Don't worry, that body was just the seed, and don't you see, as for you just as for Jesus, there will be a new body, not that same old body that died'. To miss so simple a point would indeed make someone seem stupid. And to

make this point the central one, which everything else merely elaborates, is far more probable if it was such an idea of two *different* bodies the Corinthians 'didn't get'. Otherwise, to talk of different bodies would only confuse the matter. To instead speak of *changing* the *same* body would be far more likely if it was indeed the same body Jesus had when he rose from the grave. Yet that is not the argument Paul makes.

In contrast, consider how later Christians defended the resurrection against doubters (who included both pagans *and* Christians).[92] Their approach is quite the opposite of Paul's. First of all, their thesis is exactly what we would expect from someone who believed the flesh would be raised: as Justin succinctly puts it, "the resurrection is a resurrection of the flesh which died."[93] So why wouldn't Paul ever say anything like that? There is no logical explanation—other than the obvious: Paul didn't say it because he didn't believe it. Likewise, the arguments they deploy are exactly what we would expect from someone who believed the flesh would be raised. Just like the Pharisees, they recognize and address the problem of wounds and blemishes.[94] Just like the Pharisees, they prove their point using analogies, especially the very same analogy (claymolding), but many others besides, which illustrate continuity and reassembly.[95] Just like the Pharisees, they insist that the body and the soul *must* be reunited to be judged together, and to restore the "whole man."[96] Indeed, as Athenagoras puts it, "it is absolutely necessary" that soul and body be restored together, for "it is impossible" for the "same man" to rise otherwise.[97] If it is *impossible*, if it is *absolutely necessary*, how could Paul have failed to say so? Why doesn't he berate the Corinthians for believing that the soul can be saved without a body? Why, indeed, does he never even mention a soul? Why does Paul show no interest whatever in the problem of wounds or deformities? How is it that Paul *never* resorts to obvious analogies like claymolding or shipbuilding? It simply makes no sense. Unless Paul believed something fundamentally different from what these later Christians did.[98]

So, too, Athenagoras and Tertullian know they must prove that God can keep track of all the "parts" of a decomposing body so as to reassemble it.[99] Yet Paul never comes anywhere near such an argument. His doctrine does not contain any hint of reassembly, and thus never encounters any of the ensuing problems. Unlike Paul, Athenagoras explains that "the bodies that rise again are reconstituted from the parts which properly belong to them," though this

excludes fluids like blood, since we won't need them anymore.[100] (How odd that Paul's explanation never sounds anything like this.) Unlike Paul, Tertullian argues that a change in form is not a change in substance, and we will still have the same body parts, though they will serve new functions.[101] Again, it is odd that Paul never feels any need to articulate such a point. The function of body parts never comes up—nor, in fact, does the issue of continuity. Athenagoras uses the same analogy of sleep employed by Socrates to defend the necessity of reincarnation, an obvious analogy for Paul to employ if he thought those who slept in the grave would awake in the same bodies, since his favorite metaphor for death is sleep.[102] But that gets no mention either.

And how can it be that, more than a century later, Christians would readily appeal to things Jesus said to prove their point about the nature of the resurrection,[103] but Paul, only a decade or two away, can't summon a single word from Jesus in his own defense? Nor, apparently, could his Corinthian opponents. Even more bizarre, how can it be that, more than a century later, Christians would have all kinds of eyewitness testimony to cite in proof of their position, and had no problem citing both Old Testament and New Testament resurrections as examples,[104] yet Paul, only a decade or two away, fails to summon a single example? No witnesses are cited—not even his own eyewitness encounter with Jesus! No analogous resurrections are used as an illustration or a point of contrast. No physical evidence is mentioned. So it begs all credulity to maintain that Paul believed in the resurrection of the flesh.

It goes even further. Justin, Athenagoras, *and* Tertullian take great pains to attack those who denigrate the flesh. They argue at length that the flesh is not dishonorable, not disgusting, not unworthy of restoration, but that it is fundamentally good, that it would even be evil for God to destroy what he thought good to create in the first place.[105] (Thus it is *extraordinarily remarkable* that Paul says nothing of the kind.) Many commentators assume this is the very doctrine Paul was opposing among the Corinthians, but that is impossible—if he were, he would issue various attacks against that doctrine, just as all these other authors do. But he doesn't. If anything, his mode of argument entails an implicit agreement with the flesh denigrators, or at the very least is quite neutral. Likewise, Justin and Tertullian specifically attack the doctrine of the resurrection of the soul alone, pointing out the obvious: since souls are already immortal, it wouldn't make any sense to 'raise'

them—so resurrection *must* refer to the body.[106] This is so obvious, so essential an argument, against anyone who believed in a resurrection of the spirit, that it is truly incredible Paul never brings it up.

From all this we can conclude three things with significant certainty:

First, the Corinthian faction who denied the resurrection did *not* believe in the survival of the soul. Had that been the issue, Paul would have addressed it. But he doesn't even come near it. In fact, his mode of argument entails the *opposite* view was held by his opponents. Paul's silence entails the dispute at Corinth could not have concerned belief the resurrection was already happening[107] *or* belief in salvation for a disembodied soul.[108] It had to be about the physical absurdity of a resurrection of the flesh, which entails they believed *Jesus* was not resurrected in the flesh. The objecting faction must also have believed only those still living at the parousia would be saved.[109] After all, many people in antiquity believed death was the end.[110] So the Corinthians were starting to get worried by the fact that Christians were dying, a problem Paul emphasizes throughout.[111] That the Corinthian faction in question believed death was final and irreversible is proved by the fact that Paul says if there is no resurrection, then the dead are *lost*.[112] That point would be illogical—indeed, *false*—if the Corinthians believed souls of the dead survived at all, much less went to heavenly bliss. The same goes for Paul's argument from baptizing the dead and his moral slippery slope argument in verses 29–34,[113] which make no sense at all unless pitted against someone who denies *any* reward for the dead.[114]

Second, the disagreement Paul had with the Corinthian faction did *not* hang on any proto-Gnostic denigration of the flesh. Had that been the problem, Paul would have addressed it. But he doesn't. If anything, what he did say would have supported his opponents more than upset them. This is, after all, the same man who says in Romans 7:18 that the flesh contains nothing good. Though Paul does not loathe the flesh so much as many pagan ascetics did, and does have an occasional kind word for it (for him it is not the 'mistake' of a Demiurge, but a deliberate part of God's plan), he never goes out of his way to defend it as innately good and worth preserving in the new future world, neither here nor in any of his letters. But surely if the Corinthians were claiming this, and Paul disagreed, he would have said so, and berated and corrected them. But he doesn't do anything like that. So that could not have been the issue here.

Third, Paul's doctrine could *not* have been of a reassembly and restoration of the flesh. Had that been so, he could not have failed to be explicit about it. It is simply too fundamental a point to avoid or leave obscure. If the Corinthians were scoffing at that very doctrine, as apparently they *must* have been, Paul would have been forced to defend it *explicitly*, answering their objections to it—exactly as later defenders of the resurrection had to. But there is no sign of any such debate here. To the contrary, as we shall see, his mode of argument emphasizes discontinuity and newness, suppresses continuity and restoration, and ignores *all* the objections that would lead anyone to doubt the latter, while only addressing the sort of objections one could raise against the *former*. After all, Paul never says "the same body is sown and raised," yet a single word or two would have easily established such a point, had he wanted to make it.

So strange in fact was Paul's entire line of reasoning that later Christians had to *invent* a bogus third letter to the Corinthians in order to make all those arguments that they rightly thought Paul should have made.[115] All this only makes sense if the real problem in Paul's day was the rotting corpse of Jesus, which led to a belief that Christians who died would stay dead, not being gods like Christ. And we know Paul's solution to this problem would have been conceptually intelligible to the Corinthians. When Clement later wrote to them, he used the example of the Phoenix as a proof-of-concept for the resurrection, yet as he describes it, the Phoenix rises in an entirely new body grown from its ashes, and actually carries its old dead bones back home—a perfect example of a two-body resurrection doctrine.[116] Clement may have believed the new body would still be made of flesh,[117] but as we shall see, Paul believed the new body would be made not of flesh, but *pneuma*.

5.3. First Corinthians 15:39–44

As we've seen, it cannot be denied that Paul envisions the dead assuming a different body in the resurrection. So our only task is to understand just what he means by that. We have already seen from his letter to the Philippians that the difference he draws is between the "lowly state" of our "earthly" body and the "glory" of the body of the risen Jesus, which has its true home in the heavens. This is how Paul elaborates in 1 Corinthians:

> Not all flesh is the same flesh, but there is one for men, another flesh for cattle, another flesh for birds, and another for fish. There are bodies in heaven and bodies on earth, but the glory of the heavenly ones is different from the glory of the earthly ones. There is one glory for the sun, another glory for the moon, and another glory for the stars, for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead: one is sown in decay, raised in indestructibility.[118]

Paul is describing the fact that just as human flesh differs from the flesh of fish, birds, and cattle,[119] so do bodies in heaven differ from bodies on earth. There are even multiple levels of heaven in his scheme[120]—the lunar, the solar, and the astral, each superior to the next (the word *diapherô* means "differ from," mainly in the sense of being superior to). But central is his idea that heavenly things are fundamentally *different* from earthly things. And he tells the Corinthians that therein lies the key to understanding how the dead will be raised. In one realm is decay, in the other immortality.

Paul's concluding phrase (*speiretai en phthora egeiretai en aphtharsia*) is often poorly translated. The subject is unstated, but is either the abstract third person (the nearest available subject is 'the dead,' and hence one of the dead) or 'a body' (from the following clause), as in "a body is sown in decay, a body is raised in indestructibility" (not necessarily the same body—see below). There are also no adjectives here: *phthora* (decay, corruption, ruin) and *aphtharsia* (indestructibility) are abstract nouns. Thus I have translated the phrase literally. It is clear that Paul is calling us back to his agricultural metaphor: the seed, which has its own body that dies, is sown, and the sprout which has a different body rises, into a different realm of existence. The use of the abstract entails that he means the first body belongs to the category of things that rot, while the second body belongs to the category of things that don't. Since this immediately follows his distinction between heavenly and earthly bodies, he clearly means all earthly bodies perish, and only heavenly bodies do not. There is no more credible way to understand what Paul is saying.

Paul then elaborates, repeating the same sentence structure to hammer home his point: "one is sown in dishonor, raised in glory; sown in weakness, raised in power. A biological body is sown, a spiritual body is raised."[121] There are two subjects in that last clause, hence two bodies. That two distinct bodies are meant is clear in verse 46 and the final clause of verse 44. Paul is saying the earthly flesh that is sown is dishonorable and weak and

subject to decay, but what rises is glorious, powerful, and immortal. And he captures all this in his concluding dichotomy between two fundamentally different bodies: a "biological body" (*sôma psychikon*) and a "spiritual body" (*sôma pneumatikon*). I use 'biological' (rather than 'natural') to capture the most precise meaning of *psychic* here as involving the flesh-bound principle of life. It is significant that he ties his point right back into his earlier distinction between *different* bodies: those on earth, and those in heaven. If Paul meant that one body would be changed into another, he would say so. He would *not* use the analogies that he has, which all entail different things, not changes from one thing into another. Men don't turn into fish. And fish don't turn into stars. Likewise, he would use the appropriate grammar (e.g., "*that which* is sown is raised"), but he doesn't.

Paul's seemingly unusual choice of vocabulary here has confused scholars for centuries. Normally *psychikon* and *pneumatikon* are synonyms—and typically both are antonyms of *sôma*. But Paul routinely employs the former as contrasts, so his doing so here is not unusual. More importantly, that he should attach them to *sôma*, a seemingly contrary word, is explicable precisely because of the particular Corinthian worry he is responding to. If the Corinthians were worried about how a man can be raised while still leaving his rotting body behind, then obviously Paul *had* to employ somatic language here. Otherwise, it is gratuitous and inexplicable. For if that was *not* the Corinthian worry, then the subject of many bodies would never come up, at least not so centrally as it does here. The central point would then have been how the same body changes. It would not have been this elaborate discourse on two entirely different bodies. But the latter is what we are given.

5.4. Paul's 'Spiritual Body'

The word *psychikon* is the adjective of *psychê*, "soul, life," often used to mean what you lose when you die.[122] The word for "spiritual" is *pneumatikon*, the adjective of *pneuma*, "spirit," the very same word used for the Holy Spirit, which is obviously incorporeal—or at least ethereal. The former appears only five times in the New Testament; the latter, twenty-three times.

In the Pauline corpus, *pneumatikos* is routinely contrasted with physical things, like labor, money, food, drink, rocks, human bodies (*sarkinos*), and "flesh and blood" (*haima kai sarka*).[123] So when *psychikos* is contrasted with it,

Paul certainly has in mind something physical, representing the very same contrast. For a *psychikon* is everything a *pneumatikon* is not. And above all things a *pneumatikon* is not made of flesh, therefore a *psychikon* must be.[124] In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul only mentions two bodies, and if one of them, just like all *pneumatic* things, is not flesh, it follows necessarily that the other one, the only other body there is, must be flesh.

For Contra Wright (pp. 351–52), the distinction between *-ikos* (adjectives of relation) and *-inos* (adjectives of material) is not so clear-cut, especially in Koine, as even he admits. For example: *xylikos* means "wooden," as in made of wood; *hylikos* means "material," as in made of matter; so also *sarkikos* can take both meanings: "made of flesh" and "having to do with flesh"; *metallikos*, "concerning metal," but also "having the properties of metal"; *pneumatikos* can certainly mean "containing or animated by wind," but also "sharing the properties of wind," and hence "of subtle substance," in other words "ethereal"; likewise, *psychikos* is typically an antomym of *sômatikos* ("having the properties of a body, corporeal"), with unmistakable connotations of both substance and nature. The context decides—and our context clearly indicates substances are the issue: *sarx* versus *pneuma*, different kinds of flesh, astral bodies versus terrestrial ones, and celestial versus terrestrial origins and habitations.[125]

Accordingly, in 1 Thessalonians, Paul assumes that the "whole" man is comprised of three things: "spirit, life, and body," *pneuma*, *psychê*, and *sôma*.[126] Hence Paul's view corresponds conceptually with that of Marcus Aurelius, who says we are made of three parts: body, breath ('life'), and intelligence ('soul')—where only the latter is the 'real you,' and the others mere temporary possessions.[127] In Paul's vocabulary, the unqualified *sôma* is what suffers illness or injury and is buried. The *psychê* is the life that dies (and perhaps sleeps in the grave, and is perhaps restored if a new body is provided). The *pneuma*, insofar as a man properly develops one through his relationship with God, is what survives imperishable, and forms the new body in the resurrection. That is what it means to be *pneumatikos*, the opposite of flesh and earthly life. Hence Clement of Alexandria calls the stars *sômata pneumatika*, "spiritual bodies," exactly like Paul, who associates our future bodies with the stars of heaven.[128]

Now let's examine *psychikos* in light of this. In 1 Corinthians 2, Paul contrasts things of the spirit with things of the world, especially regarding wisdom: the wisdom of this world is merely "plausible" (*peithoi*: 2:4), and is

from men (2:5), and of the present age (*tou aiônos toutou*: 2:6), which is going to ruin. This is the "spirit of the world" (*pneuma tou kosmou*: 2:12), equated with "words taught by human wisdom" (2:13). In contrast, "the spirit that is from God" (2:12) comes in "words taught by the spirit" (2:13), which, rather than being merely plausible, are "proved" (*apodexei*: 2:4), derive from God's power (2:5), and constitute a timeless mystery (2:7), that 'eye cannot see, nor ear hear' (2:9), for they are only "revealed through the spirit" (*apekalypsên . . . dia tou pneumatos*: 2:10). The contrast is between the apparent or the seeming, and the hidden truth known only by revelation. It is with this train of thought that Paul comes to say: "the *psychic* man does not accept the things of the *pneuma* of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because he does not examine them spiritually, whereas the spiritual man examines everything" in that way.[129]

Here we have the very same contrast, but now it is the *psychikos anthrôpos* versus the *pneumatikos anthrôpos*. The former means, roughly, "man of life," a man whose heart is on living in this world, who is defined by his attachment to *psychê*, his "life," unlike the "spiritual" man, who looks to the next world, to the unseen, putting his trust in God. So we can infer that the *psychikos anthrôpos* has only a *psychikon sôma* and therefore is doomed to destruction. He has put his faith in the *psychê*, and hence in the physical body and the physical world, which will both fail him, and ultimately perish. In contrast, the *pneumatikos anthrôpos* will be given by God a *pneumatikon sôma*, and thus will survive the destruction of his body and the world by escaping into a new, superior one: one that, like spiritual wisdom, comes from God, lasts forever, and belongs to the realm of the mysterious and the unseen. Many of the concepts here also turn up in Paul's many discussions of resurrection, especially the visible and perishable versus the invisible and eternal, and the mysteries from above versus the worldly things below.

The only two other uses of *psychikos* outside 1 Corinthians belong to letters not written by Paul, whose actual authors are not really known for certain, but they were probably written in or near Paul's lifetime. The first instance appears in James 3, which is an extended attack on arrogantly going too far in what you say or presume to know and comes very close to the theme of 1 Corinthians 2: human wisdom is trash, only what comes from the spirit of God is good. Hence both Paul and James admonish Christians not to voice or succumb to the wisdom of man, because down that road is divi-

sion. As James says, true wisdom shows itself in moral behavior and purity of intent, but worldly wisdom leads to arrogance, lies, "bitter jealousy" and "selfish ambition," and thence comes chaos and "every foul thing."[130] This sort of wisdom, he says, "has not come down from above, but is earthly, *psychic*, demonic."[131] So by extension, if a *psychic* wisdom is not from heaven but comes from earth and is subject to demonic forces and attached to perishable life, then a *psychic* body comes from earth and is subject to demonic forces and attached to perishable life, and consequently can have no place in heaven or our new and future life. The *psychic* is bad, rotten, doomed.

Then there is Jude, which may come from a generation after Paul, yet confirms the same interpretation. Like Paul and James, Jude attacks worldly wisdom as the cause of strife, saying that "some men have snuck in" to work evil in the church, who "blaspheme whatever they don't understand," and "whatever they know naturally, like unreasoning animals, in these things they are destroyed."[132] So, just as we have seen in the two letters above, Jude is saying that men who are like "living things" (*zôa*) and thus rely on their natural faculties (*physikôs*), are doomed to destruction.[133] As before, the reason is their inability to "understand" spiritual truth because of their attachment to the physical, earthly world. For they are "*psychic*, not having a spirit," and as before, this is the cause of divisiveness in the church.[134] So here again we have *psychikos* being contrasted with "having a spirit" (*pneuma echontes*), and again it is the difference between being attached to the life provided by the material world, and submitting to the invisible and the spiritual. And again we are told about *psychic* men (the subject throughout is the *anthrôpoi* of verse 4), who are contrasted with spiritual men (as inferred from Jude 20), and told the former will perish, while the latter will have eternal life.[135] It follows that the *psychic* man will perish because all he has is a *psychic* body, and all *psychic* bodies will be destroyed, but the spiritual man is building for himself a spiritual body (as in Jude 20) and will thus be saved, jumping into it like an escape pod at the end of days (see below).

To this end a Christian scholar in the ninth century named Photius wrote an entry for "psychikos" in his *Lexicon*. "Psychikos," he wrote, means "sarkikos," or fleshly, made of flesh, "but also indicating the human soul."[136] The word for soul here is not *psychê* but *thumos*, which indicates the seat of worldly passions and desires, often equated with the 'life force' that sustains a living thing, particularly through its appetites and rage (the word derives

from *thuein*, "to rage, seethe"). The equivalence of ideas is clear: the human *thumos* is your worldly, appetitive nature, which clings to this world, and is inseparable from your flesh, clings to it, and dies with it. This is exactly what we have found *psychikos* to mean in the New Testament: a *psychikos anthropos* is the man of worldly passions, clinging to the earthly, the animal, and to his own life (*psychê*), and thus driven to jealousy, ambition and evil. At the same time this man is doomed to destruction, because his body is also *psychikon*, a body defined by worldly passions, earthly substance, animal nature, and attachment to this life, and therefore fundamentally corruptible. This body, the body of flesh, dies and does not return.[137] We shall now see how Paul makes this quite clear.

5.5. First Corinthians 15:44–54

Paul continues his discourse on the resurrected body in 1 Corinthians by declaring that "if there is a *psychic* body, then there is also a *pneumatic* one," meaning that every carnal body leads to a spiritual body, for "the spiritual is not first, but the *psychic*, then the spiritual" follows.[138] The two bodies are therefore to be understood as existing in historical sequence: the first body we get is the *psychic* one, which obviously must mean our body of flesh and blood, which dies. Then we get a new body, made of some *pneumatic* substance. (Again, he conspicuously *avoids* saying that the one body *becomes* the other, despite that being so easy for him to say here. Instead, he emphasizes their separateness.)

Paul uses a much broader historical analogy, from alpha to omega,[139] to establish his point, and he explicitly relates this to our individual fate:

> So also is it written, "the first man," Adam, "turned into a living creature," the last Adam into a life-giving spirit. But the *pneumatic* is not first. Rather, first the *psychic*, then the *pneumatic*. The first man is of dirt from the earth, the second man from heaven. As is the one of dirt, so also are those of dirt, and as is the one in heaven, so also are those in heaven. And just as we wore the image of the one of dirt, we shall also wear the image of the one in heaven.[140]

Three things are particularly important here. First, the word "image" (*eikôn*) usually refers to an icon, a picture or a pattern of a thing, rarely the actual

thing itself. Our icon is thus equivalent to our body, which holds a pattern that represents us, like a statue. Here Paul means we now wear the image, the likeness, the pattern of Adam, but in the resurrection we will put on the image, likeness, pattern of Christ, thus emphasizing again that his resurrection is identical to ours. Significantly, Paul's vocabulary also entails that he does not equate our person or identity with our body. The body is merely something we wear or put on, and thus can trade for another.

Second, the final verb (*phoreô*) means "carry habitually" and thus "wear" (often with the connotation of burden). It has a strongly attested variant in the extant manuscripts that could be original: *phoresômen* instead of *phoresomen*. The difference is a single often-confused letter, omega versus omicron. The omega would entail the aorist subjunctive (matching the previous aorist indicative), which would have to be hortatory, "Let us wear the image of the one in heaven."[141] Since this is the more difficult reading, it is more likely to have been 'emended' to the simpler and seemingly more obvious future tense produced by using omicron. If that's what happened, then Paul wrote "so let us put on the image of the one in heaven," i.e., he is exhorting the Corinthians to future action, and the stress is on the singular event ('taking up the ongoing burden of' hence 'becoming clothed in'), not the subsequent condition ('being clothed'), though both are meant. In like fashion, when the same word is used in the previous clause, also in the aorist, the continuous aspect is being de-emphasized, so the idea of "wearing" our current bodies is conveyed more as an event than a condition. The idea of continuity is thus suppressed.

It is true that Paul can refer to this process metaphorically as already going on: we are even *now* "changing our form into the image" of Christ's "glory,"[142] and have *already* died and been resurrected.[143] So he may intend such a sense here as a sort of *double entendre*, i.e., "conform yourselves now, so you will be conformed when the end comes." But it also makes literal sense: since we are already part of Christ, we will *never* die, even when our bodies do. Though we may have to 'sleep' a bit before we get our new bodies, we won't really be dead—if we are in Christ now, we are *already* immortal. This is not entirely novel: Marcus Aurelius explains the common Stoic view that our souls are immortal precisely because they are a part of God.[144] The main difference is that Paul does not believe in anything like a soul—only the spirit, which only those in Christ have (or else, only those in Christ have a spirit that is a part of God and hence immortal: see section 5.7 below).

Finally, when we put the whole passage together, we see that Paul is saying that a man who is dead and gone (Adam), and whose existence constituted being a living *psychê*, is the analog to our own *psychic* body, having had such a body himself, but a man who now has eternal life (Christ, the final Adam) and is thus a *pneuma*, is the analog to our future *pneumatic* body, having acquired such a body himself. Adam's body, our present body, was and is made of dirt, and comes only from and lives only on earth. To prove which Paul quotes Genesis, which reads, in the Septuagint version he quotes: "God formed man, heaping him up from the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man turned into a living *psychê*."[145] Thus the body without a *psychê* is dead, a body with a *psychê* is alive. But more importantly, Adam's body is made of earth ("dirt" as Paul says). In contrast, Christ's body is *not*. It comes from heaven, not earth, and is a spirit, not a body, at least not in the sense that Adam had a body heaped up for him from the dirt. Insofar as the risen Christ has a body, it is made of *pneuma* from heaven, not earth.

Paul could hardly be more explicit: the distinction is absolute, and allows no continuity between the two bodies. They come from completely different places, and go to completely different fates. "Because through a man came death," Paul says, "and through a man came resurrection of the dead, for even as in Adam everyone dies, so also in Christ everyone will be made alive," repeating with the same vocabulary the same property of Christ as 'life-giving': hence by sharing the 'biological vitality' of Adam everyone dies, so only by sharing the 'life-giving spirit' of Christ will anyone be raised.[146] In life, Paul says, we are made of dirt and thus share the same nature and fate as Adam. But in the resurrection, we are made of heavenly material and thus share the same nature and fate as Christ—which includes residing, like him, *in heaven* (*epouranios*), hence, as he says elsewhere, "we will be snatched up in clouds, to a meeting of the Lord, into the air, and so we will be with the Lord for all time."[147]

But no flesh can enter heaven, as Paul immediately says: "I say this, brothers: that flesh and blood cannot receive the kingdom of God, nor does decay receive indestructibility."[148] Therefore, flesh and blood goes away, to corruption and decay. Period. Flesh does not receive immortality. It cannot receive it. That is why there must be a new, different body, one capable of immortality. And the only stuff in the universe like that is the stuff of heaven. That is why Christ is now a *pneuma* and has a *pneumatic* body, unlike

the body of Adam, which was made of the flesh and blood formed from the dirt of the earth. Therefore, it is impossible that Christ really said "a spirit (*pneuma*) does not have flesh (*sarka*) and bones (*ostea*) as you see I have," as Luke claims.[149] Had he said this, Paul could not believe what he himself is now saying, since it is exactly the opposite, and surely Paul would not egregiously contradict his own lord and savior.

Though Paul would certainly agree that a spirit does not have flesh and bones, since those are of the dust of the earth, and thus perishable, he could not possibly have believed that the risen Jesus was composed of flesh and bones. For Paul says such things are perishable, and they cannot enter heaven, so they cannot have any place in the resurrection. And he clearly says, contrary to Luke, that the risen Christ *is* a spirit. Nor can Christ's resurrection-body have had blemishes like wounds,[150] since that contradicts Paul's teaching that the raised body is glorious, indestructible, and not made of flesh. Nor can Jesus have eaten fish, since, as Paul says earlier, the raised body will not have a stomach, nor any need of food.[151] We can therefore reject all the Gospel material emphasizing the physicality of Christ's resurrection as a polemical invention.[152] Such stories could not have existed in Paul's day—or, if they did, Paul would surely have regarded them as heresy, a corruption of the true gospel, a product of that divisive worldly wisdom and attachment to the flesh that he so often condemns. This we can say beyond any doubt, so clear is Paul's discourse on this point.[153]

The final section of Paul's discussion ties everything up with another clothing metaphor:

> Look, I tell you a mystery: not all of us will fall asleep, but all of us will undergo an exchange in an instant, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised immortal and we will undergo an exchange. For what decays must get clothed in indestructibility, and what is mortal must get clothed in immortality. And when what decays gets clothed in indestructibility, and what is mortal gets clothed in immortality, then will happen the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up by victory."[154]

The general idea here is that at the appointed time we will instantly, dead or alive, pop into new bodies, and live forever.[155] Two particular details require careful examination here, since they are usually interpreted differently.

First is the verb *alassô*, used twice here in the future passive (*allagêsometha*), which most translators render "we will be changed." But this is not one of the verbs of transformation, which employ the *meta-* prefix.[156] The noun *allagê* means "exchange, barter," and belongs to the context of trade, buying and selling, exchanging one thing for another. So also for the verb *alassô*, which most commonly appears in the context of taking one thing in exchange for another, even changing location from one place to another.[157] It can mean "change" or "alter," but usually in the sense of exchanging one thing for another (change clothes, change places, change appearance, change gods).[158]

The exact same word occurs in Hebrews, quoting the Septuagint, in reference to the end of the world: in the beginning God "created the earth and the heavens" and "they will be destroyed" but God remains. For "everything will wear out like a garment, and much like a coat [God] will roll them up like a garment and *they will be traded in*" (*allagêsotai*), while God stays the same, his time never coming to an end.[159] That "traded in" is the meaning is clear because "change" makes no sense: they've been 'rolled up,' hence destroyed, their days do *not* go on. So how could they still be around to have "changed" into something else? And what did they change into? And how would the analogy make any sense? We don't roll up old clothes and transform them into new objects, we get rid of them (often tossing them into the fire)—and that is obviously the point of the analogy, since it serves only to illustrate what has already been plainly stated: everything will be destroyed.[160] The contrast is between God who lasts forever, and the universe that doesn't; it is not between a universe (the 'garment') that changes and an unchanging God. When it is said that God remains the same, it means God is not traded in for anything else. But what are the old garments traded for? A new creation and eternal life for his chosen.[161]

The explicit connection between such a prominent use of this verb in the future passive, and the resurrection at the end of days, in both Psalms and Hebrews, surely informs what Paul has in mind in 1 Corinthians, and the repetition of the clothing metaphor all but confirms it. He is saying we will all be traded in, too. Only we will get new bodies back in exchange for the ones that get destroyed. This is roughly equivalent to what Paul says in Romans, using the same verb again: pagans "traded the glory of the indestructible god for the likeness of a perishable idol of man, and of birds, quadrupeds, and reptiles."[162] Though the context is different, the underlying

ideas are the same: earthly creatures are perishable, divine things are not, and fools trade the one for the other. Conversely, at the resurrection, the bodies of the saved will be traded the other way, the animal for the spiritual.

The second detail is the actual clothing metaphor itself. Paul describes the exchange by saying in effect that the mortal, rotting body will be "clothed." What does he mean? The verb in question means literally "go into" and is a familiar idiom for getting into armor, a shirt, or a sandal. Does this make sense on the theory that our bodies will change? Not much. If a corpse enters a garment, it is still a corpse. How would dirt putting on a coat make it no longer dirt? But on the theory that our bodies will be traded in we can make some sense of the metaphor: as the mortal body enters the realm of the imperishable, and is enveloped by it, it passes away, leaving only the imperishable garment, without which we would perish entirely. The garment thus becomes our 'escape pod' into the next life. Dale Martin imagines something similar: the flesh 'drops off' leaving the 'spirit' underneath to rise into life, as a new material body (pp. 128–29). As a later Gnostic text says, "the visible members which are dead shall not be saved," but "the living members which exist within them shall arise," and then the invisible 'you' becomes 'revealed'.[163] As Marcus Aurelius says: the soul is our 'divine part' that lives forever, while the body is our 'perishable part' that we leave behind, so after death we become 'a different kind of living being, and will not cease to live'.[164] In like fashion, Paul imagined our 'spirit' as a part of Christ's pneumatic body, so it will rest with him in heaven until the end of days, when it will be assembled, organized, into a coherent, individual body.[165]

As the Gospel of Phillip puts it: "Some are afraid lest they rise naked. Because of this they wish to rise in the flesh, but they do not know that it is those who wear the flesh who are naked," and those who strip it off who are clothed.[166] So, also, the *Ascension of Isaiah* speaks of the raised 'stripping off their robes of flesh,' donning 'heavenly robes like angels,' and ascending to heaven.[167] The idea that the old body passes away and the inner, better body rises, is described by Lucian: "everything of the body is stripped off and left below" when the dead "ascend," so when Hercules "was burned and became a god," he "threw off the whole human part that came from his mother and flew up to the gods, bringing the divine part, pure and undefiled," i.e., the part from his father, which had been "sifted out by the fire."[168] It is often overlooked that few among the ancients imagined souls or spirits as imma-

terial in our sense, but usually, as we saw with Philo, it was made of *something*.[169] We can also be sure Hercules is not becoming a 'bodiless' god in this story because part of what it meant to *be* a god (in traditional polytheism) was to have a body, with location and the power to be seen and affect the physical world.[170] Thus, Lucian is describing a two-body doctrine of 'resurrection,' albeit within the pagan tradition, which Paul has Judaized, thus accounting for the differences (such as immediate ascension versus sleeping until a single universal event, and innate divine parentage versus joining a collective divine spirit, and so on).

This could correspond at the end of days to the destruction of the whole universe in Paul's view,[171] but it is not necessary to think only in those terms. Jesus was not raised at the end of the world, so we cannot be sure how much of the scene that Paul depicts (of what happens at the last trumpet) applied to him. After all, Paul is now talking about the final event, not Christ's resurrection. But in both cases we can imagine that as we put on one garment, we shrug off another. The corpse in its grave was already in life impregnated or enveloped by a spiritual body. Then in death one sleeps in that garment until the resurrection, and it is in this garment that the dead man rises, leaving his old garment in the grave. This fits the analogy drawn in the Hebrews-Psalms passage, where the old garment of the world is cast aside. Paul does mix metaphors a bit. The 'naked seed' implies that to be in our present body is to be naked, so there is only one garment in that picture: the resurrection body. But Paul also says that we become naked by losing our present body,[172] and that we 'wear' the image of Adam's body before we die, but then 'wear' the image of Christ's body when we are raised,[173] hence exchanging one garment for another.[174] So the concept of casting aside nakedness by donning a garment amounts to the same thing. Either way, the old body is discarded.

This is the most plausible reconstruction of what Paul means. Otherwise, it is hard to explain why Paul doesn't just say "this mortal body *becomes* immortal." If that is what he meant, surely that is what he would have said. But he didn't. Instead he says "what is mortal enters into immortality," a highly abstract phrase, neither clear nor direct, but certainly mysterious, just as he claimed it would be. Obviously what he wants to say is not simple. He is struggling to describe it.[175] But what he *isn't* saying is that the mortal body will change into an immortal one. For he quite clearly says that *can't*

happen: "perishability cannot receive imperishability," so it won't receive it by putting on a cloak of imperishability. He must mean something closer to what Josephus said: that the mortal man, as a mortal thing, must cross into the realm of immortality by assuming a new immortal body. To Philo, of course, spirit and body were opposites. So Paul's idea of a "spiritual body" seems a paradox. But when we look at the concepts *behind* his words, even Philo believed that spirits are made of an ethereal material, the same material of which stars were made—and obviously stars are visible things with location and volume. And so it makes obvious sense when Paul says stars have bodies, though of a fundamentally different kind than bodies down here on earth. Paul and Philo are not that far apart. They are simply using different language for what amounts to nearly the same thing. Both say the resurrected body will be *ouranion*, "celestial." And both regard the body we have on earth as a burden we must discard. To this we now turn.

5.6. Second Corinthians 4:16–5:8

When Paul writes again to the Corinthians, he finds the need to elaborate even further on what he means by this resurrection doctrine—which proves it was neither simple nor straightforward, for the Corinthians continued to have problems understanding it even after receiving the first letter. So in 2 Corinthians 5, he revisits the mystery of the resurrection. First Paul reiterates the truth of the Gospel and the sincerity of his belief (in chapter 4), hence revisiting the issue first covered in 1 Corinthians 15:1–11, reaffirming that despite their doubts there *will* be a resurrection.[176] "So do not become discouraged—though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner one is being renewed day by day," because we Christians look to what is *not* seen, not what can be seen, for "the things that can be seen are temporary, but the things that can't be seen are eternal."[177]

Now why would Paul say that? We might think he is referring to the secrets of the Gospel,[178] but this is unlikely, for three reasons. First, he explicitly links 4:18 with what follows, not with what came earlier, because he begins the next verse (5:1) with the connective *gar* ("For . . ."). Second, this introduces the section corresponding to and thus elaborating on 1 Corinthians 15:12–58, which is Paul's answer to the worry that the Corinthians will not be resurrected, by explaining how their worry (which we analyzed above) is

unfounded. So 4:18 pertains to the nature of the resurrection and the specific Corinthian worry about that, and not any difficulty with the Gospel in general. And third, in accordance with both points, what *actually* precedes and thus leads to 4:18 is the thought stated in 4:16: that we should not be discouraged by the fact that what we see, our "outer man" (hence our physical body) will decompose (as it begins to do even in life, as we age or become crippled), because it is our "inner man" (our spiritual selves, hence our spiritual body) that is preserved by God through the grace of Jesus Christ,[179] even though we can't see this part of us so as to confirm it is immortal. *This* is the thought of the passage, which Paul goes on to elaborate:

> For we know that if our earthly house of the body (*skênê*) is torn down, we have a building from God, a house made without hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this one we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, and if in fact we get undressed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in the body (*skênê*) we groan because we are weighed down, and for this reason we do not want to undress, but to put something on, so what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.[180]

So have courage, he says: "while we are home in our body (*sôma*), we are absent from the Lord," but "we walk by faith, not by sight," so "we prefer rather to be absent from the body (*sôma*) and to be home with the Lord."[181]

Remember the context: the Corinthians are *still* worried about how they can be resurrected, and this is Paul's answer to their worry. Therefore, this passage must be interpreted in such a way that it alleviates whatever their worry was, reassuring them that they will be raised. So again the key to understanding what Paul means here is to understand what that worry was. But there seems to be no plausible worry we can pin on the Corinthians, given that they have no problem believing Christ was raised. But the enigma is easily solved if their worry stemmed from the problems created by a two-body doctrine: if Christ's body remained on earth, and so ours will as well, in what sense can we really be resurrected? Indeed, from Paul's reply this seems quite obviously what was worrying them. Hence Paul reminds them that "even though we have known Christ in the flesh, now no longer do we know" him thus,[182] and he connects this directly with our resurrection into a new body: "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation—the old things have passed away, behold new things have come."[183] So if anyone is in Christ at

the end or *dies* in Christ before the end, then he is 'in Christ' and so will enter into a "new creation," i.e., a new body, different from the one that will have "passed away" (*parerchomai*, lit. "pass by," hence leave behind).

Consider the facts: Paul reveals that what discourages the Corinthians is the fact that, according to Paul's doctrine, their bodies are going to ruin ("our outer man is decaying"), which may mean (again) that believers are dying, and their comrades are worried they 'missed the boat' so to speak.[184] Paul answers this not with reassurances that God will restore their outer man, but by telling them it is their *inner* man that will live forever. That only makes sense if Paul means what he says: though our bodies rot, our spirits have eternal life—in some form or other. If he did not mean that, he would have answered in exactly the opposite way. And Paul makes this point even more explicit by emphasizing that good Christians don't worry about visible things (like bodies), but focus on invisible things (which, obviously, can't be their bodies), because visible things will pass away, and only what is presently *invisible* will live forever. This emphasis only makes sense if Paul is repudiating our current *body* as temporal, as what does *not* survive in the resurrection. Then Paul gets even more explicit by taking up the discussion of our earthly bodies, which he says are mere dwelling places here on earth. With copious vocabulary he equates our bodies with buildings, structures in which we reside. Our present bodies, he says, are *not* the places we will dwell in when we ascend to heaven at the end. Instead, God will make an entirely new house for us there. Paul contrasts the dwellings at length, in terms directly parallel to those employed by Josephus, Philo, and others: in our earthly bodies we groan under the burden of their weight, and like the Essenes, we long to get our new bodies, our true bodies, without which we feel naked.

The analogy of clothing is directly combined with the analogy of structures that one inhabits: we "put on" the new bodies in the same way as we inhabit a new place or put on a new coat. And Paul leaves no doubt that this is what he means, since he says that what is mortal will be completely consumed (just as bodies are consumed by the grave, and just as death itself will be consumed in the end). He does not mean that our bodies will be converted into new ones. If he did, he would simply say that. Instead, he ties up his final discussion of the nature of the resurrection by drawing us back to the point with which it began: "we walk by faith, not by sight," and so prefer the invisible (the new body we will get) to the visible (the old body that will

see destruction), because we prefer the body God will give us in heaven, to the body we have now—the one in which we are presently "at home," which does not reside with God. And so Paul concludes that the only way to be with God in the end is to *leave* our present abode (to *ekduei*, "get out of it"), which he already said is our earthly body.

5.7. The Body as Tabernacle and Dying in Christ

Remarkably unusual in 2 Corinthians 5:1 and 4 is the use of the word *skênos* instead of *sôma* for "body." For this is a term unique to Orphic conceptions of the body as a residence, jailhouse, or tomb.[185] It derives from the word *skênê*, which means "tent," "hut," or "tabernacle," but cast in the third declension it always connotes the "body" conceived as a tent or hut in which the soul resides—or from which it has departed, hence *skênos* often means "corpse." It should be obvious how closely this connects with Philo's soteriology, and the Essene view according to Josephus. Philo also regarded our bodies as residences from which we will depart in the end, and as corpses even when alive. And both he and the Essenes described by Josephus held the body to be a burden that weighs us down and keeps us from company with God. Though Paul's view is his own, it clearly has strong affinities with ideas like these and can only be understood in light of them. There can be no other explanation for Paul's appropriation of such unusual and unique vocabulary, especially when placed in such a blatant context of buildings and burdens.

To get a feel for this concept cluster, observe how a pre-Christian pseudo-Platonic dialogue puts it: once the body and soul are separated at death, "the soul (*psychê*) is settled in its dwelling-place (*oikeion topon*)," meaning heaven, while "the body (*sôma*) is left behind," because "being earthly and mindless, it is not what a man is." Rather, "we are a soul, an immortal form of life (*zôion athanaton*) that has been caged inside a mortal jailhouse (*en thnêtôi katheirgmenon phrouriôi*)." So "from crappy material nature has fastened all around [our soul] this tent (*skênos*)," while our soul "because of its sympathy, longs for the celestial (*ouranion*)," sharing as it does the "same quality as ether."[186] Here we see the same cluster of concepts: the body is bad, corruptible, earthly (*geôdes*, the same word used by Philo), and is left behind, while the true self, made of heavenly material (ether), is immortal, and ascends to its proper dwelling in heaven. The idea of the body as a 'container' for the

soul also matches Orphic theology and is found in pagan and Jewish thought.[187] So Paul also treats the body as a container for the spirit in 2 Corinthians 4:7, where we are described as the *ostrakina skeuê*, the very 'clay pots' that, once used, must be *destroyed*.[188] Pitchers of clay were also regarded as 'made by hands' (in contrast to more precious vessels of gold, which are not) and as beyond repair once broken.[189] So Paul envisions our bodies as 'made by hands' and thus beyond repair, and so we need *new* bodies 'not made by hands,' and thus of more precious material. In just this way Paul fuses Jewish with Orphic theology.

The Orphic cluster of ideas certainly infiltrated popular Judaism by the early first century.[190] Consider the Wisdom of Solomon, an apocryphal text also composed around that very time, or a little earlier. Repeating the Pauline notion that worldly wisdom is vain and a stumbling block, and only inspiration from the Holy Spirit can bring true knowledge,[191] the text declares: "For the thoughts of mortals are worthless, and our conceits dubious. For the perishable body weighs down the soul, and the earthly *skênos* loads down the mind that thinks many thoughts."[192] Though not connected here with resurrection, the terminology and concepts are the same, and the context is identical to that of Paul's discussions of the *psychic* man and body. And so in 2 Peter we find a hint of the same sentiment. Though employing the word *skênôma*, which in the plural usually means "army tent," but in the singular often takes the same meaning as *skênos*,[193] the author writes that "as long as I am in this tent" and "knowing that the removal of my tent is close at hand" he must write down his testimony so his readers can consult it after his "departure" (*exodos*).[194] This terminology of approaching death, and then dying, echoes our analysis of Paul: the body is a mere residence that we inhabit temporarily, which will be torn away, and which we will depart upon our death. Calling this an "exodus" also calls up Philo's conception of the departure of the soul for heaven as something metaphorically prefigured in the legendary Exodus from Egypt. This is probably no coincidence, as both Peter and Philo no doubt drew on earlier sources for their ideas.[195]

Accordingly, the great Christian scholar Origen understood Paul's resurrection doctrine just as I do. Predictably, he was branded a heretic, his treatise on the resurrection was destroyed, and many of his other statements on the resurrection were 'revised' to agree with the ascendant orthodoxy.[196] But in the most trustworthy statements that have survived, Origen says that

"according to the scriptures" the body in which Paul says we groan is the *skênos tês psuchês*, "the tabernacle of the soul," and that:

> To be in any physical location, the soul, in its very nature bodiless and invisible, must have a body suitable in nature to that place. So it strips off from itself the former body which it carries here, which was once necessary but is then superfluous to its second life, and puts on another there, over what it had before, needing a superior garment for the purer, ethereal, celestial places.[197]

Origen compares this process to the casting off of the placenta at birth. Elsewhere in the same work he says we do *not* rise in "the same flesh" (*autais . . . sarxi*) but "transfer" (*metabolên*) to "better" bodies (*epi to beltion*), "as if" (*hoionei*) rising "from" (*apo*) our corpses, just as a stalk rises "from" (*apo*) the seed; we need bodies to get around, but we will not need the body that rots in the grave; and so, it is something indestructible "inside" our present bodies that rises to form the new body.[198] Likewise, Methodius' attack on Origen's lost treatise on the resurrection makes several points explicit and clear: Origen argued that the raised body is *not* the same one that died, that identity could never reside in any substance, but only in form, and that just as fish need fins and gills to survive in water, those in heaven will need new ethereal bodies, just like angels.[199]

It is clear that Origen's conception is much closer to Paul's than anything we find in the rest of the Church Fathers, yet Origen is right in the community of Philo, and even more so of Josephus himself, who also said we would get new "purer" bodies.[200] This is surely what Paul had in mind: the stripping off of one body and the putting on of another. The only hint of confoundment in Paul's attempt to describe such an idea lies in the fact that Paul appears not to have resolved the problem of the "vessel of identity." Origen, Philo, and Josephus all draw on the familiar concept of the bodiless, invisible *psychê*, as the soul, the "true self" that always endures. Many Jews, even the Rabbinical Pharisees, understood and made use of such an idea.[201] But it seems Paul did not accept such a notion. He apparently did not believe there was any "thing" that could retain our individual identity without a body. He certainly never speaks of such, in any of his correspondence. Though he views man as composed of *psychê*, *pneuma*, and *sôma*, he never seems to imagine any of these things surviving on its own. Rather, the *psychê* is "life" itself, a prop-

erty only ever possessed by the living. This may change its fundamental nature from the biological to the spiritual, but if it survives in the grave, it does so only in the sense of being "asleep." Yet it is a mere vitality, and is not equated with the 'inner man' who survives death to rise again.[202]

Then comes the *sôma*, which, as Origen says, is needed to exist in any particular "place," and thus essential to resurrection and the experience of eternal life. But Paul (like Origen) never says the *sôma* is the vessel of identity.[203] It is not who you are, and it is not what preserves your personality in the grave. To the contrary, it is a mere residence, and he says we have to trade bodies, the perishable one for an imperishable one. Just as Origen says, we need a body to "exist" in any location, but any body will do, whatever body is suitable to the place we will live.

The *pneuma* comes closer to preserving one's identity, but not as a single entity itself. It does not appear to be a "soul" that departs the body upon death and floats around somewhere. Rather, by participating in the *pneuma* of Christ, by becoming "one" with it, our identity is preserved within the collective spirit of God.[204] Otherwise, our own *pneuma* is destroyed at death—or not even something we have unless it is developed and "grown" inside us through communion with Christ.[205] This is probably how Paul would have described the 'inner man' who will never really die.

So to Paul, it is not a disembodied soul that preserves us while our flesh rots in the grave, but our participation in the spirit of Christ.[206] This view of participatory resurrection has replaced for Paul the traditional Jewish view of the corporate resurrection of Israel: for those "in Christ" are the *new* Israel.[207] At the resurrection, Christ will draw us out of his collective essence and place our unique being within an ethereal body, so we can exist again as individuals.[208] This is why Paul so routinely speaks in terms of being or living or dying "in Christ" as what is so essential to our salvation.[209] Such a way of talking was as bizarre then as it is today. But if we understand it as I have described, it makes perfect sense. Paul's ideology of corporate identity thus explains "in Adam" as belonging to the world of flesh as a corporate entity—through birth we are all just snipped-off parts of the same body, the body of Adam, the ultimate ancestor of all mankind. But "in Christ" we belong to the world of divine *pneuma* as a corporate entity, such that through *re*-birth we become united to a *new* body, the body of Christ, the ultimate *savior* of all mankind.

Such a corporate view of participatory resurrection makes sense of bap-

tism for the dead, which amounts to the same idea as the salvation of an unbaptized spouse through a baptized one: through sharing one flesh they share one spirit, and so belong to one and the same body.[210] Hence I agree with Conzelmann that Paul's "exposition . . . shows that existence without a body is a thing he cannot conceive of at all," or, at least, that neither he nor the Corinthians believe (p. 280). That is why *present* participation in the *body* of Christ is so important to Paul's entire soteriology, and why such participation only makes logical and metaphysical sense if Christ's resurrected body is made of *spirit*—since we cannot join his *flesh*, except in a purely metaphorical sense, i.e., *through the spirit*. Only by such a means can someone "survive" without their own "body" after dying.[211]

This was probably a novel way of imagining survival, and so Paul found it exceptionally difficult to find the words to express it. Without an individual entity that can survive death and wait for the new body, Paul had to resort to ambiguous, indirect metaphors. This explains why there is no easily identifiable subject in 1 Corinthians 15:53–54 or 42–43, which is very odd. What constitutes the "we" who will do the wearing in 15:49, for example? Where does the "inner man" of 2 Corinthians 4:16 go when we die? If it never dies, then—for the dead—where is it? Indeed, *what* is it? Paul doesn't say. Probably because he didn't know how to. Being an individual drop in the sea of God's spirit, not existing as an individual, yet still existing, is not the sort of concept that admits of easy description. There is no word for such an existence. It is not a "thing," yet it contains the essence of one, which can be poured out *into* something (a new body) at the appointed time. Origen found a way to articulate this, using a soul (*psychê*) as something that has no location yet still somehow retains the properties of an individual. But Paul had not yet hit upon such an expression. Nor was he likely to. He had already appropriated a very different meaning for *psychê* and still had his mind on the corporate nature of this structure, our "being in Christ," more than on how the individual survives within such a structure. He could only assure the Corinthians that it did.

This brings us all the way back to where Paul began, with his seed analogy. Such a concept might imply continuity to us, but not to those who grew up in an agricultural society. The biology of seeds is such that they have shells, as anyone then would know—the entire point of grinding grain, for example, was to separate "the wheat from the chaff." The shells, by which

seeds are identified, are *not* continuous with the sprout, but are cast off and rot away in the ground. Instead, it is the *inner* part, the part you *can't* see (until the new birth), that sprouts into the new plant. This is surely what Paul and his readers got from his analogy: the body, the "outer man," is the shell that is sloughed off, and the kernel, the "inner man," is the body that will sprout anew at the resurrection, preserved through its integration with the imperishable *pneuma* of Christ, like a seed nourished by the water of life. The corpse of Jesus was just the chaff. The risen body was the kernel's sprout. And as for Jesus, so for us. That is the entire thrust of Paul's argument.

5.8. Other Epistles

I have made a pretty solid case for Paul's advocacy of a two-body doctrine. This interpretation only finds further support in the remaining epistles. For example, Paul's many declarations of the Christian "creed" omit any reference to a literal bodily appearance of Jesus after death. Nowhere does Paul state that a fleshly resurrection of Jesus was a necessary belief, or even a belief anyone held. The fullest account of the necessary elements of the Gospel creed appears in 1 Timothy, where we find the incarnation, spiritual vindication, association with angels, the teaching and success of the Gospel, and the ascension.[212] Postmortem appearances get no mention here, nor do they in Philippians, which only lists the incarnation, crucifixion, exaltation, subjection, and success of the Gospel.[213] Even when the appearances finally find a mention in 1 Corinthians, they are equated with Paul's encounter.[214] And we cannot *presume* that the Gospel at the time implied bodily encounters and empty tombs, especially when we can account for everything Paul says without them.

Instead, Colossians says Jesus gave up his "body of flesh" for us (1:22), such that we now must act "in the flesh on *behalf* of his body," because his body is "now . . . the church" (1:24).[215] When did that happen? The Gospel that Paul describes nowhere says anything about Jesus rising in his same old earthly body and *then* exchanging that body for the earthly body of the church. The only moment Colossians, or any other letter, allows for such an exchange to happen is Christ's death and resurrection. The moment Christ rose from the dead, the church became his body—his earthly body, that is. That makes no sense if Christ rose with the same body he died in, and still has. After all, Christ is said to *be* risen, not to have thrown off his risen body

after being raised (what are we supposed to imagine he did with it?). So also everything Paul says about having "the spirit of Christ" in us and only "the spirit of Christ" being life.[216] How can Christ be in two places at once, flesh in heaven, spirit down here inside us? And if only the *spirit* of Christ is life, how can the *flesh* of Christ be alive? Many puzzles like these arise. But on the two-body doctrine this all makes complete sense: Christ rose in his new spiritual body, in which he ascended to heaven and now sits enthroned, and through the Holy Spirit his spiritual body (like the tentancles of a hydra) now 'inhabits' every Christian, and hence the Christian community as a whole, making that community his new earthly body. At no point in this equation does the corpse need to be vaporized or taken up to heaven. Nor would that make much sense. As Origen says, the corpse is just the placenta. It is the mere shell of the seed that is left behind after the plant rises in glory. It is mere dust. By dying, it has done all it needed to do.

Nor do any of the other epistles, whoever actually wrote them, assert a resurrection in the flesh or even suggest it. While the Peter of Acts says the flesh of Christ is immune to decay, the Peter of the Epistles says *all* flesh withers away like grass, declaring that Jesus was "put to death in flesh but made alive in spirit."[217] It seems obvious that to this Peter's understanding the body of Jesus died, and then he rose only in spirit form. This is basically just what Paul says in Romans 1:3–4: Jesus was born in "flesh" but raised in "spirit." The only credible translation of *kata* in these verses is either location ("on," "among," "in the realm of") or form ("as," "in conformity to," "having all the properties of"). Either way, Paul and Peter understand the same dichotomy: the incarnated Jesus had the properties of and dwelled in the realm of flesh, while the risen Christ had the properties of and dwelled in the realm of spirit. Accordingly, when Peter comes to say that "when we made known to you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, we were not depending on myths that had been cleverly devised," but "we became eyewitnesses of that man's magnificent greatness," he reports that he himself heard the voice of God from heaven at Christ's transfiguration—in other words, during his ministry.[218] No mention is made of what would have been far more valuable, even crucial eyewitness testimony: seeing and handling the risen body, seeing the tomb empty, observing his bodily ascension into the clouds. Obviously there was no resurrection or ascension or empty tomb to see. All those details could only be known through revelation and scripture.[219]

The only passages that present a difficulty for my theory are two verses in Romans 8. The first, Romans 8:11, says our *mortal* bodies will be 'made alive'. This seems odd coming from a man who is elsewhere emphatic (as we have seen) that a mortal body *cannot* enter eternal life. So insistent is Paul on this point that we are compelled to accept a contradiction in his thought, as if he was teaching (or conceding) a different doctrine to the Romans.[220] Unless he is not talking about the resurrection here. And the context does seem to be our present life, not the resurrection. He does not say our mortal bodies will be *raised*. Paul often speaks about our present circumstances in the language of resurrection, so we do have to be wary.[221] Here, Paul argues: we do not walk in the world of flesh, but that of spirit (8:4–5); for the former "is death," the latter "life and peace" (8:6); *in the here and now* (8:7–8); but if "the spirit dwells in us" *now*, as is the case for those, and only those, who "belong to Christ," then we are in the realm of spirit even now (8:9); therefore, if Christ is in us now, though the body is *already* dead, "the spirit is life" in us (8:10). It is *this* train of thought which Paul concludes as follows:

> So if the spirit of the raiser of Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the raiser of Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies, through the Spirit dwelling in you. And so, therefore, brothers, we owe nothing to the flesh, we ought not live in the flesh, for if we live in the flesh, we are destined to die, but if we kill the deeds of the body we will live.[222]

The grammar of 8:11 often becomes misleading in translation, giving the appearance that the 'also' (*kai*) implies likeness to the resurrection of Christ, when in fact, grammatically, "he who raised Christ" is the agent, not the point of comparison. Instead, the point of comparison is the giving of the Spirit. So: if the Spirit dwells in us now, we will *also* be made alive now. This is essentially the very same thing Paul says on two other occasions, both clearly in reference to the present and not the future: "even though we are dead" to sin, Christ has "made us alive" in the here and now.[223]

In Romans 8, Paul goes on to talk about how we are presently linked with the Spirit that will save us in the end, and moves on to discuss the resurrection. Thus, though Paul does eventually turn his mind to the future, and links our present with it, his discourse up to then is about what is happening to us in the present: God gives life to our bodies now, bodies that will die *because* they are mortal (the only reason to describe our bodies as such),

but because the *Spirit* in us "is life" (the entire point of Paul's line of reasoning), we will live—though here he does not specify how. His point throughout is that we must not have any concern for the worldly things that will pass away, meaning everything of flesh.[224]

The other verse is Romans 8:23, which speaks of our "bodies" being ransomed in the resurrection. But we should understand this in light of another passage which speaks of being "inside" and "outside" the two houses (that of flesh and that of God),[225] which deliberately parallels Paul's "inner" and "outer" man dichotomy.[226] Thus, when Paul says in Romans 8:23 that we groan "within ourselves" until the "release of our body," he means the "setting free" of our "inner man," hence entering into our new spiritual body. Accordingly, the present world, just like our present bodies, will be destroyed—a view made explicit elsewhere: for example, though a man's "flesh" will be "destroyed," his "spirit" will be "saved."[227] Yet the passing away of the world Paul still calls a "liberation."[228] Then he links this via 8:22 with what he says about our body. So he must mean the same thing there. After all, this is meant to expand on what Paul said previously, where he argues that we long to be "freed" from the body of flesh, and have been sold into slavery "because" we are of flesh.[229] Thus, to ransom us from our bondage requires getting rid of the flesh that imprisons us: the outer man passes away, and the inner man is freed, surviving in his own ethereal body.[230]

That Paul's language in Romans 8 can so easily lead to confusion about how he conceives of the resurrection is precisely why he had to elaborate in such detail in 1 Corinthians 15, and yet *again* in 2 Corinthians 5. Though the letter to the Romans may have been his last, it is to a new Church in Paul's travels. Romans thus represents the beginning of his discourse, for the "babes in Christ,"[231] reserving the more careful doctrine for later when his audience is more "mature."[232] So chronological order is misleading: in terms of doctrine, the order is the other way around—conceptually, the elaborations in the Corinthian letters are what would follow Paul's discourse in Romans. And so we must look for clarification in those elaborations, not the introductory remarks in Romans. And the elaborations tell us it is not our mortal bodies that rise. They pass away. We rise, instead, in spiritual bodies. This is confirmed by an analysis of just what Paul claims about his own witness to the resurrection of Christ, to which we now turn.

5.9. Paul's Encounter with the Risen Christ

Paul is a witness to the resurrection. After all, he asks the Corinthians, "Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?"[233] And he places himself on the list of witnesses to the risen Christ, along with Peter, James, and everyone else.[234] The only distinction he makes between his experience and the others is that it came last in sequence (*epeita . . . epeita . . . eschaton de pantôn*). Otherwise he emphasizes its equality in kind (*kamoi*, "to me, too," hence just like everyone else).[235] The purpose of Paul's list is to summarize all the evidence on which their faith in the resurrection of Christ rests, since he then uses the presumption of that faith as the linchpin in his following argument (as we saw earlier). We can therefore be assured that this is the best he had to offer by way of proving it. Yet all he mentions are scriptures and epiphanies.[236] No physical evidence, no special testimony. Yet we already saw how priceless such evidence and testimony would have been for illustrating and demonstrating whatever he wanted to say about the nature of the resurrection. So its absence here is not a mark of assumption, brevity, or oversight. It indicates there is no other evidence.

Everything for us, then, rests on what Paul means by these appearances of Jesus, since only that is acceptable today as evidence for an actual historical event. And since he means what he himself saw, which he does not distinguish in any fundamental way from what anyone else saw, an analysis of his encounter with the risen Christ must be normative. The only firsthand account we are given of this encounter is in Paul's letter to the Galatians. The Gospel, Paul says, "I neither received from a man nor was I taught it, except through a revelation of Jesus Christ,"[237] which he says was not a "flesh and blood" encounter.[238] This is the very same Gospel he received and passed on to the Corinthians, including the revelation that Christ had been raised—for the exact same technical word for received tradition is used there as here (*paralambanô*) and the phrase "the Gospel preached" in both verses is nearly identical.[239]

The key term here is *apokalypsis*, the same word that comprises the title of the New Testament book of Revelation. It means literally an "uncovering" of hidden things. It is typically a spiritual experience.[240] This does not mean that *to them* it was regarded as a purely inner, subjective, psychological event, though in hindsight we now know this is what most such experiences appear to have been.[241] But in those days, especially for the religious minded, a spir-

itual experience would have been understood as an objective presentation of a genuine external reality, albeit in a mysterious manner. Thus, Paul envisions Christ's return in the end as an "apocalypse," his spiritual body physically and visibly descending from heaven.[242] And however his vision of the risen Christ first came to him,[243] convincing him of the Gospel's truth, he would no doubt have believed he was seeing or hearing the real spiritual body of Jesus (possibly even physically becoming one with it in his own spirit and thus "feeling" the real Jesus within). But we can rightly be skeptical.

Paul's conception of his first encounter with Christ as an "apocalypse" is elaborated in his letter to the Romans, where he says the Gospel and the Kerygma both came from "the revelation of the mystery kept in silence through ages past, but now made clear through the prophetic scriptures at the command of the eternal God, and made known to all nations."[244] Ephesians 3 entirely corroborates that account, using much of the very same language. Revelations typically, by definition, reveal 'mysteries,' and, as we saw earlier, when Paul says he knows what will happen at the last trumpet, he calls it a mystery, hence indicating that his knowledge probably came by revelation. This clearly does not mean a flesh-and-blood Jesus knocked on his door, sat down, and told him.

What is also telling is that Paul here, in both Romans and Ephesians, assumes that the Gospel, which he said to the Corinthians was known by scripture and epiphany, came entirely by a revelation from God, who in effect "interpreted" for him some hidden meaning in the scriptures.[245] Paul has thus completely omitted any reference to conversations with a flesh-and-blood Jesus, as well as any witness or physical evidence of such a thing. That Christ is raised is known from *scripture*, which is known because Christ "revealed" it in a spiritual epiphany after his death. This fits perfectly a situation where his body remains buried, for then the only way it could be known that he had been raised (exalted and reembodied in heaven) would be through the spiritual revealing of hidden meaning in scripture. And that is exactly the only way Paul says it was known.

As further proof, consider another "revelation" described by Paul. In 2 Corinthians he gives an example of "visions and revelations":

> I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I don't know, or out of the body I don't know, only God knows—such a man

> was snatched up as far as the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or without the body I don't know, only God knows—that he was snatched up into paradise and heard unspeakable words, which man is not permitted to tell.[246]

This is a perfect example of the kind of thing an apocalypse was for men like Paul. On the one hand, it is mysterious and not entirely comprehensible. On the other hand, it is believed to be real—even though clearly to us an internal and psychologically subjective event, like an "out of body experience" involving imagined transport to heaven.[247] Paul's strangely emphatic uncertainty as to whether he went up there in his body, or out of it, confirms what we have learned: Paul had no clear idea of how someone could be in any location at all without a body, yet a normal human body cannot enter heaven. If this man he knew had gone to heaven bodily, he would have to have been given a spiritual body, which would all but constitute a resurrection before the last trumpet, thus contradicting Paul's own doctrine, and making no sense of the fact that he came back into his old body again afterward (which leaves open the question of where his new heavenly body then went, if it is supposed to be imperishable). Therefore, Paul confesses he has no idea how this trip to heaven was accomplished, but God can do anything, so we needn't doubt that it happened. But what this event and Paul's witness of the risen Christ have in common is the subjective, spiritual nature of the experience. We now know such experiences can have a purely psychological and biological cause, and thus can easily be doubted as experiences of any genuine external reality. But that is not how they were understood by religious men in those days.

Since Paul was entirely converted, even from open hostility to the faith, by that single spiritual event described in Galatians, and was sustained in that belief, and actively promoted it for three years before even discussing any accounts with the apostles, it is clear that it was not stories of empty tombs or doubting Thomases that generated early Christian belief, but revelations of the Spirit.[248] No one doubts that Paul was one of the most fervent and important believers in the Gospel, without whom the Christian religion might never have succeeded. Yet if he could be moved to unyielding faith by a mere revelation, we can conclude that anyone else would have as well, including the very first Christians. Indeed, the entire gist of Paul's letter to

the Galatians is that revelation is the *only* truly respectable evidence for religious doctrine, that believing it on the mere testimony of human beings is inferior and untrustworthy.[249]

Finally, Acts also depicts Paul's experience as a vision—just a light and a voice, visionary details so unique and unusual, even for Luke, that Luke must have felt constrained by a genuine tradition about Paul's experience, which must have indeed described it as merely a light and a voice. So those two elements can probably be taken as genuine, further confirming my assessment. However, in every other respect I believe Acts is worthless as a source, because Luke presents three different accounts that all contradict each other, and all contain details that seem contrary to Paul's own story in Galatians—which does not mention attendants, denies meeting anyone, much less Ananias, and places his return to Jerusalem with Barnabas much later, and with no suggestion of danger.[250]

5.10. Assessment

I believe I have more than adequately demonstrated that Paul probably believed in a two-body doctrine of the resurrection, wherein those who sleep in Christ will be given at the last trumpet entirely new bodies to live in, and not their same old bodies reconstituted. Then they will be snatched up to live forever in heaven. Paul certainly believed the resurrection of Jesus was essentially the same sort of event, differing only in that it took place before the last trumpet. Therefore, Paul probably believed Jesus was "raised from the dead" by being given a new body in heaven, and not by being physically resuscitated in the grave. This is perhaps why the language he uses for resurrection is never that of regeneration, but always of waking from sleep and ascending, matching his constant reference to death as "sleeping."[251] Whereas Plutarch calls resurrection what we should *expect* it to be called—a *palingenesis* ("back to life," "regeneration") or an *anabiôsis* ("return to life"),[252] Paul shuns these words, calling it instead an *anastasis* ("rising up") and an *egersis* ("waking up").[253] The dead wake from sleep in their new bodies and rise up to heaven to be with God.

This view agrees with all Christian literature before the Gospels and fits the sort of evidence they provide. Therefore, it was probably what the original Christians believed. After the death and burial of Jesus, his "disciples"

received spiritual "revelations" which they took to be visitations of the newly embodied Christ. In these epiphanies the secret meaning of various passages in the Old Testament were "revealed" to them, which "predicted" and thus confirmed that Jesus was indeed granted the new resurrection body in advance of everyone else, and was exalted above all other beings in the universe.[254] This revelation also told them that the promised resurrection of the righteous would only happen to those who became one with Christ in spirit, in order to share in the same resurrection bestowed upon him. It follows that there was no empty tomb, and no physical encounters with a risen body of Jesus.

PART II: THE LEGEND OF THE EMPTY TOMB

6. ORIGINS OF THE EMPTY TOMB LEGEND

In the generation after Paul someone wrote what was probably the first-ever account of the "Gospel" of Jesus Christ. Tradition has assigned the book to an unknown author named Mark, according to legend, Peter's scribe. It is not known when the book was written. Most scholars believe it was sometime around 70 CE, give or take a decade. But it is clear that Paul knew nothing of the work, so we can be fairly certain it was not circulating when he was alive. Yet this Gospel contains the first known appearance of an empty tomb story. All other accounts rely upon it and basically just embellish it or modify it to suit each author's own narrative and ideological agenda.[255] As nearly all scholars agree, Matthew and Luke clearly used Mark as one of their sources, repeating the same elements in the same order and often using identical vocabulary and word order, not only for this story but for the whole Gospel. And though John does not directly use Mark as a source, it is probable his account ultimately derives from it.[256] Beyond mere conjecture, there is no indication any of them had any other source of information for the changes and additions they made. In the case of Matthew there is good evidence his "source" was in fact the Book of Daniel—meaning his changes do not derive from any historical aims or sources, but are purely a didactic invention. It is probable the changes found in Luke and John are no different.[257] And since they are clearly deploying a polemic against opponents of a resurrection in

the flesh, their employment of an empty tomb story is guaranteed, regardless of whether they had any reliable historical sources attesting it.[258]

Luke does claim to have many sources, but does not say who or for what material, so this can be of no help here, where we are interested in one particular unit of a much larger hagiography.[259] Likewise, John claims to derive from an unnamed eyewitness, but only in a section of his Gospel that looks like it was added by a different author, who does *not* include mention of an empty tomb.[260] So though it is *possible* these other Gospels preserve some genuinely independent evidence for an empty tomb, it is just as possible they do not. We can safely account for everything they add as a legendary or didactic embellishment upon the basic original claim in Mark.

This does not mean these authors must be considered liars. The logic of their sectarian dogma would lead to an honest and sincere belief in an empty tomb: since Jesus *must* have risen in the flesh, his tomb *must* have been empty. The rest they can have total confidence in through the two popular "excuses" of their day, which were respectable then, but now are often agreed to be dubious: (1) historical truth can be revealed directly by God through the Holy Spirit, and (2) whatever isn't historically true is nevertheless didactically true. Just as Paul can find "hidden meaning" in the Old Testament Prophets, and Philo and the Therapeutae can find deep symbolic truths in ostensibly historical narratives like that of Exodus, so could the Gospel authors *create* narratives with deeper, hidden meanings under a veil of history. It was honest work then, even if it disturbs us today.[261]

This leaves us with Mark. Even if not certain, it is a credible hypothesis that all other accounts originated with his. But where did his come from? I believe he invented it. For Mark the empty tomb was not historical, but symbolic. It *represented* the resurrection of Jesus, with a powerful symbol pregnant with meaning—not only elucidating the "core" Gospel inherited from Paul (e.g., 1 Corinthians 15:3–5, which is ambiguous as to whether Jesus rose in the flesh or the spirit), but also maintaining Mark's own narrative theme of "reversal of expectation." The empty tomb was for Mark like the Exodus for Philo: educational fiction, whose true meaning was far more important than any historical claim ever could be.

I cannot say for certain whether Mark was a Pauline or a "Sarcicist" (from *sarx*, *sarkikos*: an advocate of a resurrection of the "flesh"). At one point Mark implies belief in resurrection of the flesh—and denial of the Pauline doctrine

of the raised body as incorruptible—by having Jesus imply that severed hands, feet, and eyes will stay severed even after the resurrection.[262] But this also goes against conservative Pharisaic resurrection doctrine, wherein dismembered bodies would be so raised, but would then be healed anyway. So this is probably not to be taken literally. It certainly creates more questions than it answers (what if you cut off—or, worse, crush your head?). It is also possible Jesus does not mean resurrection, but entrance into the life or kingdom as entrance into the Christian church, into salvation as such. After all, Paul would agree it is "better" to lose your limbs, since you won't need them when you get your new body.

In contrast, when Mark has witnesses claim Jesus said, "I will destroy this holy residence made by hands, and in three days build another house not made by hands," he seems to be quite overtly calling up Pauline resurrection doctrine: the human body in which we now reside will be *destroyed*, and a new, superhuman body fashioned in its place.[263] For the *naos*, as the sacred building containing the image of God, is here an obvious analogy to the human body—Paul often equated the body with a temple,[264] and the three days is an overt invocation of the three days between Christ's dying and rising. One might also see a connection between Pauline resurrection discourse on nakedness and clothing, and Mark's use of a "young man" who loses his linen garment (representing the body of flesh, like the linen cloth that "clothes" the dead Jesus in Mark 15:26), becoming naked (Mark 14:51–52), then after "the resurrection" is clothed in a white robe (Mark 16:5), representing the celestial body (e.g., Dan. 12:2–3, 10).

So, on the first passage Mark would seem to believe in a resurrection of the flesh, warts and all, while on the second passage Mark would seem to believe that the body of flesh will be destroyed and a totally different body created from scratch to replace it, a view further supported by the "young man" analysis. Mark also reiterates the Pauline view (consistent with but not entailing a two-body resurrection doctrine) that "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."[265] Finally, Mark records a saying of Jesus that the raised will be "just like angels in the heavens,"[266] and angels were typically ethereal.[267]

Unfortunately, all these passages are ambiguous, leaving unclear what Mark really believed. But it doesn't matter. Whether Mark was a Pauline or a Sarcicist, either way, on my theory the empty tomb story originated as a symbol, not a historical fact. It then became the subject of legendary embel-

lishment over the ensuing generations, eventually becoming an essential element in the doctrine of a particular sect of Christians, who spurned Paul's original teachings, and insisted on a resurrection of the flesh instead. To these two claims (invention and embellishment) we now turn.

6.1. THE ORIGIN AND MEANING OF MARK'S INVENTION

Where did Mark get the idea of an empty tomb, and what did he intend his empty tomb narrative to mean? The answers lie in Mark's own thematic agenda, and his surrounding literary and cultural milieu. Mark may have had some inspiration from Homer,[268] or from contemporary ascension mythology (both Pagan and Jewish), wherein the absence of a hero's body is taken as evidence of his ascension to heaven and concomitant deification.[269] But the most likely origins are the Psalms, Mark's penchant for reversing the reader's expectations, and the "body as tomb" concept-cluster, which we already observed had deep connections in Paul.

Any one or several of these ideas may have been at play in Mark's mind, but we can divide all influences into two possible directions: If Mark was a true Pauline Christian, then the tomb represents the corpse of Jesus. If not, then the tomb represents the ascension of Jesus. There would surely be overlap: a Pauline would find double meaning in the tomb as symbol of ascension *and* the earthly tabernacle, while a Sarcicist would find double meaning in the tomb as symbol of ascension *and* escape from death. So we must first survey the three most likely sources of inspiration Mark drew upon, which his more educated readers would have understood (and which "mature" initiates may have been secretly told).

6.1.1. Psalmic Origins

Crucial to any account of the Gospel would be elucidation of the idea that Christ was raised on the third day after his burial.[270] Many Jews held a belief that "until three days" after death "the soul keeps on returning to the grave, thinking it will go back" into the body, "but when it sees the facial features have become disfigured, it departs and abandons it."[271] This is corroborated by

the oft-repeated principle that the identity of a corpse could only be legally established by the corpse's "countenance" within three days, after which it became too disfigured to be identified.[272] Both facts were explicitly connected:

> For three days the soul hovers over the body, intending to re-enter it, but as soon as it sees its appearance change, it departs, as it is written, "When his flesh that is on him is distorted, his soul will mourn over him" [Job 14:22]. . . . [So] the full force of mourning lasts for three days. Why? Because the shape of the face is recognizable, even as we have learnt in the Mishnah: Evidence is admissible only in respect of the full face, with the nose, and only within three days.[273]

This third-day motif was certainly widespread, and may be very ancient, perhaps lying behind the prophecy of Hosea 6:2 that "He will revive us after two days, he will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before him."[274] The covenantal use of the third day motif in Exodus 19:11, 15, and 16 is also an inviting possibility, as is the story in 2 Kings 2, where, after his ascension (2:1, 11–13), men search for Elijah for three days and don't find him (2:17).[275] Parallels with the then-contemporary Osiris cult are curiously strong, too, though I see no need for such a connection. Among the links: Osiris was sealed in a casket (equivalent to a tomb) by seventy-two conspirators, while the Sanhedrin who condemned Christ consisted of seventy-one men, and Judas makes seventy-two; Osiris was then resurrected on the third day, and died during a full moon, just like Christ (for Passover comes at the full moon).[276] I don't know what to make of this, though it does seem an improbable coincidence.

Whatever the case, Paul's conviction in 1 Corinthians 15:4 that Jesus "was raised on the third day according to the scriptures" *must* derive from some Old Testament passage, even if it was also developed in conjunction with Jewish or Pagan ideology. And the Hosea passage is the most probable scriptural source—or perhaps several passages were linked. That Paul never mentions this or any other passage as supporting a third-day motif is of little importance, since Paul *says* he got it from *some* passage in the Bible, and (per section 5.9 above) we know there were a great many biblical passages that the Christians relied upon for their beliefs, and these were probably employed in oral discourse far more often than having any occasion to be mentioned in Paul's letters.[277]

In choosing how to illuminate this motif in his parable of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, however, Mark drew upon the Psalms. He consciously modeled his crucifixion narrative on Psalm 22, adapting phrases directly from the Septuagint text thereof,[278] including Christ's cry on the cross, the taunts of the onlookers, and the dividing of garments by casting lots. Crucifixion also calls up the psalm's image of the messiah's pierced hands and feet.[279] This begins a logical three-day cycle of psalms: Psalm 22 marks the first day (the crucifixion), Psalm 23 the next (the Sabbath, during which Christ's body rests in the grave), and then Psalm 24 predicts and informs the resurrection on Sunday, the third day. Psalm 23 is the Funeral Psalm ("The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want . . . Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death") and thus represents Christ's sojourn in the realm of the dead. It concludes with what can be taken to be a prediction of a Pauline resurrection: "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever," just as Psalm 22 concludes with a prediction of salvation for those who believe in the Christ.[280] Then Psalm 24 proclaims God's Lordship over the universe (24:1–2) and anticipates the New Era (24:6), which begins with Christ's resurrection and ascension to heaven: "Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?" And with what imagery is this signaled? "Lift up your heads, O gates, And be lifted up, O ancient gates, That the King of glory may come in!"[281] And what are the gates that open up in Mark? The "stone" that "had been rolled away, although it was extremely large," a symbol of the barrier of death, which Christ has finally broken through.[282] So the gates of the land of the dead have opened for him, proving that he has "ascended to the Lord's hill." Hence the empty tomb signifies not only the conquest of death, but Christ's ascension—and the fact that he *is* the Christ.[283]

That Mark is drawing on Psalm 24 for his empty tomb narrative is indicated by the very same method employed for Psalm 22: he adapts and inserts a peculiar phrase from the Septuagint version of the Psalm. Breaking with the Pauline phrase "on the third day" that most characterizes the Gospel, Mark instead employs the strange Hebraic formula "on the first from the Sabbaths," meaning "on the first day of the week," i.e., the first day after each Sabbath.[284] This phrase appears in only one place in the entire Old Testament in Greek: Psalm 24, in the title verse, "A Psalm for David of the First Day of the Week" (this is not present in the Hebrew from which modern English

translations derive).[285] The obvious narrative role for Mark of Psalms 22 and 23, combined with this peculiar phrase as an overt marker, confirms that he is calling the reader to reflect on Psalm 24 and to "interpret" his empty tomb narrative in light of it. And in so doing, we see the tomb as a symbol of the gates of death that Christ has flung open.

Mark also calls upon other biblical parallels to illuminate the secret meaning of the narrative. For example, both Mark and Ecclesiastes speak of walking under the sun and seeing the youth who "stands in place" of the king (Eccles. 4:15).[286] But even more prominently, when the women say "who will roll away the stone . . . ?" Mark copies a phrase from the Genesis narrative of Jacob's fathering of the twelve tribes of Israel through two women (and two slaves),[287] which, like Mark, contains a reversal of expectation theme, leads to the foundation of a new Israel (the twelve tribes prefiguring the twelve disciples), and involves the visit of a woman (bringing in the sheep to be watered from the well, the parallel to Christ's tomb, whose opening also brings the water of life to the faithful).[288] And Psalm 24 also links us to this very narrative and its meaning, through its prominent mention of Jacob and his nation (24:6). Thus, just as the empty tomb served for Matthew to evoke Daniel in the Lion's Den (see my chapter "The Plausibility of Theft" in this book), so here, for Mark, it evokes Jacob's watering of the sheep, and the founding of Israel.

But why the first day, why Psalm 24? Besides the handy alignment of the three psalms with the three days of Christ's death, sojourn, and resurrection, and besides the rich meaning that can be drawn from the text, brilliantly illuminating the Christian concept of salvation, the "first day" also represents the day of circumcision, and through faith in Christ's resurrection the believer is spiritually circumcised.[289] But even more importantly, it represents the first day of the New Creation, a fundamental symbol in early Christian eschatology.[290] Thus, by inventing an empty tomb, Mark can exploit all these layers of meaning, and convey deep truths about the Gospel.

6.1.2. Orphic Origins

We have already seen (in sections 3 and 5.7 above) how Philo and the Josephan Essenes saw the living body itself as a corpse and a tomb. This concept appears to have originated within pagan Orphic theology.[291] Paul also

regarded the living body as dead,[292] and the influence of Orphism on certain strands of Jewish thought from as early as the second century BCE is well established.[293] Plato puts the Orphic view like this: "In reality we are just as if we were dead. In fact I once heard the wise men say we are now dead, and the body is our tomb."[294] In fact, he has Socrates claim the word *sôma* itself was actually *derived* from a word for 'tomb' (*sêma*) for this very reason, as "some say it is a tomb of the soul (*psychê*), as if the soul were buried in the present life," especially the "Orphics," who think the soul needs a body as an "enclosure, in order to keep it safe, the image of a jailhouse," hence making the body "a safe" for the soul.[295]

Accordingly, a tomb would be a recognizable symbol for the body, especially in the context of a salvation cult. And an empty tomb would therefore symbolize an empty body, representing the fact that the soul has risen (into a new body), leaving a mere 'shell' behind, which was its 'tomb' in life. To understand the resurrection then requires one to understand that the body is *not* where the person lies: for they have gone elsewhere. In Orphic theology, this meant a bodiless soul had ascended to heaven. In Pauline theology, it would mean the person had been reclothed in a new body and ascended to heaven. This is exactly what Paul calls a "mystery," and like all mysteries, it would not be written down in the cult's sacred story but explained through an oral exegesis, and only to initiates, while the outward appearance of the story would serve to conceal this mystery from the uninitiated. This could well be just what Mark was doing.

Orphic mysteries were one of the most popular categories of salvation cult in the ancient world, widely known to everyone. A common motif was that initiates would be taught the secret of eternal life, which often included instructions to follow after they died. Several metal plates preserving these secret instructions have been recovered from the graves of initiates. The best example, from around 400 BCE (and thus contemporary with Plato) is the Gold Leaf of Hipponion.[296] Though this preserves the instructions in a significantly older form, and in a different dialect, than what would be known to Mark, the links remain startling and informative. According to the plate, when an initiate enters the land of the dead, they will find "a white cypress" on "the right-hand side" (*leuka* and *dexia*). In Mark 16:5, when the women enter the tomb (the land of the dead), they find a "boy in white" on "the right-hand side" (*leukên* and *dexiois*). The initiate is told to go *beyond* the

white cypress, where guardians of the sacred waters will ask them "What are you looking for in the land of the dead?" In Mark, too, the women are searching for something in the land of the dead: Jesus, the water of life. Yet they, too, are supposed to go further (physically, to Galilee; but psychologically, to a recognition of the truth), for they are told that though they are "looking for Jesus," he is not there (Mark 16:6). The initiate is supposed to ask for a drink from the sacred waters, because they are "perishing" (*apollumi*, hence "being destroyed, dying"), and the guardians will give it to them, and they shall thereby secure themselves eternal life in a paradise of the hereafter.[297] Likewise, for the women (and the reader), through Mark's invocation of Jacob's well, the tomb represents the well of eternal life, from whose waters the sheep must drink to be saved. Just as the initiate must drink of the waters of "memory" (*mnêmosunê*) to be saved, so do the women enter the tomb, a "memorial" (*mnêmeion*), where they are told to *remember* something Jesus said (Mark 16:7).

Thus, Mark's empty tomb story mimics the secret salvation narratives of the Orphic mysteries, substituting Jewish-Messianic eschatology for the pagan elements. Only in an understanding that *Christ is not here* (meaning: the land of the dead, but also the corpse) will the water of life be given. This is the fundamental underlying message of Mark's empty tomb narrative. The tomb, and its emptiness, symbolizes the land of the dead, or even the dead flesh of Jesus, and the details (the boy in white on the right, the water of life being sought, the need to go further, the role of memory) evoke the symbols of Orphic mystery cult, thus becoming a narrative symbolic of the path to salvation: one must "see" the truth, and become "one" with the *new* body of Jesus in heaven.

6.1.3. The 'Reversal of Expectation' Motif

Finally, an empty tomb serves Mark's thematic agenda of 'reversal of expectation,' which structures much of his Gospel, in which he clearly sought to "reverse" the reader's expectations throughout his narrative. As just a few examples: James and John, who ask to sit at the right and left of Jesus in his glory (10:35–40), are replaced by two thieves at his crucifixion (15:27); Simon Peter, Christ's right-hand man who was told he had to "deny himself and take up his cross and follow" (8:34), is replaced by Simon of Cyrene (a

foreigner, from the *opposite* side of Egypt, a symbol of death) when it comes time to truly bear the cross (15:21); instead of his family as would be expected, his enemies come to bury him (15:43); Pilate's expectation that Jesus should still be alive is confounded (15:44); contrary to all expectation, Christ's own people, the Jews, mock their own savior (15:29–32), while it is a Gentile officer of Rome who recognizes his divinity (15:39); likewise, the very disciples are the ones who abandon Christ (14:50 and 66–72 versus 14:31), while it is mere lowly women who attend his death and burial, who truly "followed him," and continue to seek him thereafter (15:40–41, 15:47, 16:1), fulfilling Christ's word (the very theme of reversal itself) that "the least shall be first" (9:35, 10:31); and, the mother of all reversals, Mark ends his Gospel with the women fleeing in *fear* and *silence*, and *not* delivering the good news (16:8), the exact opposite of the "good news" of the "voice crying out" of the "messenger who will prepare your way" with which Mark *began* his Gospel (1:1–3).[298] The parables of Jesus are also full of the reversal of expectation theme,[299] and Mark appears to agree with the program of concealing the truth behind parables.[300] And so, the empty tomb story is probably *itself* a parable, which accordingly employs reversal of expectation as its theme. The tomb *has* to be empty, in order to confound the expectations of the reader, just as a foreign Simon *must* carry the cross, a Sanhedrist *must* bury the body, and women (not men) *must* be the first to hear the Good News.

This is why, contrary to all expectation, Jesus is anointed for burial *before* he dies (14:3). This is meant to summon our attention when the women go to anoint him *after* his death (16:1), only to find their (and our) expectations reversed by finding his body missing, and a young man in his place—and this with an *explicit* verbal link to the exchange of one thing for another in Ecclesiastes, and just as Mark's tomb door is explicitly linked with another reversal-of-expectation narrative in Genesis. The expectation is even raised that the tomb will be closed (16:3), which is yet another deliberate introduction of an expectation that Mark will then foil. Just as reversal of expectation lies at the heart of the teachings of Jesus—indeed, of the very Gospel itself—so it is quite natural for Mark to structure his narrative around such a theme. This program leads him to "create" thematic events that thwart the reader's expectation, and an empty tomb is exactly the sort of thing an author would invent to serve that aim. After all, it begs credulity to suppose that so many convenient reversals of expectation actually happened. It is more credible to suppose

that at least some of them are narrative inventions. And one such invention could easily be the empty tomb. And as we saw above, an empty tomb would have made a tremendously powerful parabolic symbol, rich with meaning.

6.2. SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENT

It cannot reasonably be doubted that the Gospels exhibit legendary embellishments upon the basic story of Mark. However much you might quibble about which elements were invented, it is clear at least some were. Mark tells a simple story about a Sanhedrist burying Jesus, women going to the tomb and finding it open, meeting a single boy in white, then running off.[301] But by the time we get to Matthew, Joseph has become a "disciple of Jesus" (27:57) who buried Jesus "in his own new tomb" (27:60); the boy has become an angel descending from heaven (28:2–3, 5); the women experience a "massive earthquake" and watch the angel descend and open the tomb (28:2); guards have been added to the story (27:62–66; 28:4, 11–15); and the women run off but now get to meet Jesus, even touch him (28:9). There can be no doubt that we are looking at extensive legendary embellishment upon what began as a much more mundane story. And all this embellishment took place in less than forty years, since most scholars agree that Mark dates later than 60 CE and Matthew earlier than 100 CE.

We can see the same trend in the other two Gospels. Luke, unaware of Matthew and less prone to the fabulous, also "embellished" the story received from Mark, though less excitingly. Joseph is only said to have been a swell guy who abstained from condemning Jesus (23:50–51), who buried Jesus in an empty tomb (not said to be his own: 23:53). But these are still details not mentioned by Mark. Likewise, the one boy has been multiplied into two men, but who "suddenly appear in dazzling apparel" (24:4). This is an obvious embellishment. The women don't get to meet Jesus this time, *but* we do get a tale now of Peter going to check the tomb and confirming that it is empty (24:12), also something not mentioned by Mark. John borrows some of the embellishments of Luke, but makes the story entirely his own: Joseph is now a *secret* disciple (19:38), and again uses an unused tomb (not said to be his own: 19:41), but delivers an absurdly fabulous burial (19:39); only one woman (Mary) goes to find the tomb empty (20:1), but as in Luke, she tells Peter, who goes to see for himself, this time with *another* disciple (20:3–8);

Luke's two men now become two angels (20:12); and again Mary gets to meet Jesus and possibly touch him (20:16–17).

Similar trends follow the appearance narratives: from none in Mark's original composition (ending at 16:8), to a hint of physical contact in Matthew (28:9), to a full-on handling and eating and proclamation from Jesus himself on the nature of his body in Luke (24:37–43), to the most detailed Doubting Thomas story in John, involving physical confirmation of wounds (20:24–29), plus an overt polemical message (20:29–31), making explicit the motive that was only implied by Luke. It is quite unreasonable to maintain that we are not seeing a trend of legendary embellishment here, especially given the evidence from Paul that these appearance narratives must have been crafted to sell a doctrine that Paul denied (see section 5.5. above).

This should not come as a shock. Already in Paul's own day embellishments and distortions were entering the record. Paul and others of his generation often lament the proliferation of newfangled Gospels that contained false claims, including "myths" and "genealogies" that produce all kinds of "questions."[302] So the church was already dividing into several sects, each with their own ideas about what happened and what it meant. So we can be sure this would only have gotten worse after Paul's death. There can be no doubt, then, that before the extant Gospels were written, some sects had strayed in one direction away from the truth, and others in another.

Following this trend, it is likely that the sects we generally label (often incorrectly) as the Gnostics went all the way toward Orphic notions of a resurrection of a disembodied soul, while Sarcicists went all the way in the other direction, to a fanatic insistence on resurrection of the flesh. Both were equally wrong, equally far away from what Paul originally preached. Yet the need to oppose each other probably led to rapid polarization of their doctrines.[303] To make themselves less and less Gnostic, the Sarcicists became more and more insistent on fleshly conceptions of the resurrection.[304] At the same time, prospective converts who favored one view or the other would join the church that most agreed with them, thus polarizing these sects even further. All this clearly took place in less than two generations after the death of Paul, since already we see a complete abandonment of Pauline resurrection doctrine (in Luke and John) by the end of the first century. It also cannot be doubted that several so-called Gnostic sects were in full swing by then as well, so we can be *certain* that fundamental distortions in understanding the

Gospel and the nature of Christ's resurrection had occurred in that time. Therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility that the eventual orthodoxy had *also* undergone just as fundamental a distortion of the truth at the same time.

Dale Martin demonstrates throughout his study on the Corinthian letters that the disputes there often broke down along class lines, the elites pitted against the commons.[305] On the resurrection issue, elites found a resurrection of the body distasteful to their educated sensibilities, but the uneducated masses loved the idea and accepted it readily—it was more easily grasped, and more obviously what most people *wanted*.[306] At the same time, Caroline Bynum argues that the church could more easily promote (and thus benefit from) martyrdom, maintain its power hierarcy, and control the bodies of congregants, if it preached a resurrection of the flesh.[307] Jerome, for example, disgusted by women using the Pauline doctrine to justify suggestions of equality, implied that resurrection of the flesh was needed to oppose this, ensuring women remained subjugated to men in the future world.[308] In contrast, Paul envisioned the elimination of all distinctions of class and race in the end, and perhaps also gender as well.[309] Apparently, the Sarcicists weren't going to stand for any of that rubbish, and modified their resurrection doctrine accordingly.

All this would make the Sarcicist sect a strain of anti-intellectualism, much like the bulk of modern fundamentalism, which is also prone to dogmatic distortion of the historical record and to polarizing itself into extreme positions. And Roman persecution would ensure that most sensible people, as well as those who preferred the idea of spiritual salvation, would gravitate to "accepted" salvation cults, which already offered such a thing, leaving the Christian church to be flooded with fanatics who disliked that idea, wanting to get their bodies back, leading to the eclipse of Paul's original vision. After all, Sarcicist Christianity was the only cult in antiquity offering resurrection of the flesh on easy terms (the Jews, by contrast, required adherence to a mass of stifling rules and mutilation of the penis).

What I have presented so far is an articulation of my theory as to the origins of the empty tomb story, first as a metaphor in Mark, then as an inspiring element in the development of a Christian heresy that took the empty tomb as literal, using it to bolster their own doctrine of a resurrection of the flesh. That this heresy became the eventual orthodoxy is simply an accident of history and politics. Now I must conclude by surveying the evidence that this theory is both plausible and probable.

7. FERTILE SOIL FOR THE GROWTH OF LEGEND

First: Plausibility. William Lane Craig puts the challenge like this:

> Roman historian A. N. Sherwin-White remarks that in classical historiography the sources are usually biased and removed at least one or two generations or even centuries from the events they narrate, but historians still reconstruct with confidence what happened. In the Gospels, by contrast, the tempo is "unbelievable" for the accrual of legend; more generations are needed. The writings of Herodotus enable us to test the tempo of myth-making, and the tests suggest that even two generations are too short a span to allow the mythical tendency to prevail over the hard historic core of oral tradition. Such a gap with regard to the Gospel traditions would land us in the second century, precisely when the apocryphal Gospels began to originate.[310]

So, the argument goes, the sort of legendary embellishment I am advocating should be impossible in so short a time (two generations, roughly forty or fifty years). Of course, this argument is already deeply challenged by such obvious evidence of legendary developments, not only (for example) in Matthew, but in the parallel development of quasi-gnostic sects (whose own Gospels were not preserved to us by the eventually victorious sect that opposed them), both taking place within two generations. That is why Sherwin-White, whom Craig cites, in the very same book Craig cites, freely admits that, despite Craig's representation of his position, "Certainly a deal of distortion can affect a story that is given literary form a generation or two after the event, whether for national glorification or political spite, or for the didactic or symbolic exposition of ideas."[311]

To be exact, Sherwin-White never uses the word "legend" in the chapter Craig quotes. Nor does he discuss the empty tomb narrative, or any miracle at all—his remarks are confined solely to the trial of Jesus. In this context Sherwin-White talks mainly about "myth" (pp. 189, 190, 191, 193), cast sometimes as "propaganda" (p. 186), "contradictions" (p. 188), "falsification" (p. 191), the "didactic or symbolic exposition of ideas" (p. 189), or "deliberate . . . embroidery" (p. 193), all of which he admits can arise within two generations. He clearly has in mind *any* false story, of whatever origin, that is later believed to be true. Yet his argument from Herodotus rests merely on

a single case, and even that contains the full admission that a legend *was* widely believed true at the time. The only difference is that Herodotus challenges it, as he did many claims.[312] But we have not even a single example of such a method or approach being employed by the Gospel authors: they never challenge or even question anything they report, and unlike Herodotus they never once name a single source, or consciously weigh the evidence for or against any particular claim.[313]

Thus, the analogy with Herodotus fails. The Gospel writers are much more akin to the people who believed the legends, than they are to a careful critical historian like Herodotus himself, who often doubts them. And yet even Herodotus believed without question many obvious legends (as we shall see), a point Sherwin-White curiously neglects to mention, probably because it would have undermined his argument for the historicity of Christ's trial.[314] Worse still, Sherwin-White's one case study is so dissimilar to the empty tomb story that no analogy can be drawn between them, and thus it is inappropriate for Craig to employ it in such a way. First, the event in question happened in the very same city in which Herodotus and Thucydides still lived, whereas this was not possible for the Gospel authors, who wrote after Jerusalem was destroyed, and about whose origins we know nothing with any confidence. And second, the truth could be recovered because it was preserved in an inscription, which Thucydides cites, yet obviously no inscriptions were available for the Gospel authors, or their readers, to check their story by. So the failure of this one legend to swallow up history in Athens is entirely credited to facts not applicable to the empty tomb story.

So not only is Sherwin-White wrong about myth overcoming history, Craig has further misrepresented his case. Craig implies that Sherwin-White did not believe any legendary material had accrued in the Gospels. That is not true. And Craig claims that "tests" (plural) have been performed on the text of Herodotus that suggest myth cannot prevail over history. That is also not true—Sherwin-White performed only one "test," and even that is severely compromised by his biased selection of a single case that supports him, neglecting the many cases in Herodotus that do not, and this one "test" case is not analogous to the empty tomb story anyway. Finally, Craig does not explain what Sherwin-White means by a "hard historic core" or how one is supposed to ascertain which elements represent that core, as opposed to legendary embellishments thereto. It is thus quite possible that the "hard his-

toric core" is that Christ was executed, buried, and then, through epiphanies and scripture, believed to have been raised from the dead (all this seems clear enough from Paul), and that the added detail of discovering an empty tomb is the embellishment upon that basic historic truth.

In short, since Sherwin-White believes an element of a story *can* be invented within two generations purely for a "didactic exposition of ideas," and since that is exactly what I am saying Mark did when he created the empty tomb, Craig cannot cite Sherwin-White against my position. Just as Matthew could invent guards, an earthquake, and a descending angel, so could Mark invent an empty tomb. This is all the more clear when we notice that Mark is not writing a history, but a "Gospel," which, just as we see in Matthew, is more focused on a symbolic expression of deeper truths, than on preserving any actual history.[315] Mark's Gospel is more akin to a didactic hagiography (which are by definition *legends*—see below) than any other genre of literature, and thus has little in common with Herodotus in approach or purpose.[316]

Finally, quite contrary to the hyperbole of Craig and Sherwin-White, the cultural setting in which the Gospels arose was a time and place fertile and ripe for legendary developments of exactly the sort I am alleging. We have numerous ancient examples of rapid legendary development of the very same order. And our sources are wholly inadequate for deploying any kind of "argument from silence" against an empty tomb 'legend'. Such a development is therefore plausible.

7.1. SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT

Tacitus was well in tune with his time. "That everything gets exaggerated is typical for any story," he says, for "all the greatest events are obscure—while some people accept whatever they hear as beyond doubt, others twist the truth into its opposite, and both errors grow over subsequent generations." For this reason he says he tries his best to critically examine and explode any false stories he can, and begs his readers "not to prefer the incredible things that get published and readily accepted, to the truth uncorrupted by marvels."[317] It is clear that Tacitus was well aware of how readily and quickly legends in his day would spread and win the complete conviction of those who heard them.[318] It is equally clear that his conscious interest and effort to

oppose this effect is exactly the sort of critical analysis and commentary that is nowhere to be found in the Gospels. We thus have every reason to expect legends to appear in them.

It is crucial to understand how *different* the situation was in the first century, in comparison with what we take for granted today. Skeptics and informed or critical minds were a small minority in the ancient world. Superstition and credulity ruled the day. Though the gullible, the credulous, and those ready to believe or exaggerate anything are still abundant, they were far more common in antiquity and taken far more seriously. We are talking about an age of fable and wonder, where magic, miracles, ghosts, and gods were everywhere and almost never doubted. Some among the well-educated elite had enough background in science and skepticism not to be duped, but these men were a rarity even among their peers. And because they belonged to the upper classes, their arrogant skepticism was far more often scorned by the common people than respected. People back then wanted more to *believe* than to doubt.

We should remember, too, that Christianity began, and for a century grew, mainly among the masses, not the elite. Yet there was no mass public education at all—much less in science and critical thinking—and no mass media of any sort, nor any institution devoted to investigating the truth, or publishing what they found. By our best estimates, only 20 percent of the population could read anything at all, fewer than 10 percent could read well, and far fewer still had reasonable access to books. In comparative terms, even a single page of blank papyrus cost the equivalent of thirty dollars—ink, and the labor to hand copy every word, cost many times more.[319] So books could run to the thousands or even tens of thousands of dollars in value each—meaning, by and large, only the rich had books, or access to libraries, of which there were few. Travel, likewise, was expensive and dangerous. Thus, the ability to 'check' a claim was almost nonexistent, as was the will to bother—and even rarer was the skill to pull it off.

By way of example, consider what the common people thought about lunar eclipses. They apparently had no doubt that this horrible event was the result of witches calling down the moon with diabolical spells. So when an eclipse occurred, everyone would frantically start banging pots and blowing brass horns furiously, to confuse the witches' spells. So tremendous was this din that many better-educated authors complain of how the racket filled

entire cities and countrysides.[320] This was a superstitious people. And yet the truth about the real cause of eclipses was well-known and thoroughly understood—among the educated elite. Plutarch gives us more evidence. He laments how doctors were willing to attend to the sick among the poor for little or no fee, but they were usually sent away in preference for the local wizard. And at one point he has to go out of his way to try and debunk the popular belief that a statue of Lady Luck actually spoke, or that the statues of other gods really weep, moan, or bleed.[321] Yet it is most unlikely anyone among the common people would ever read or hear his rebuttal, and even more unlikely that they would respond in any other way than to mock him as an ignorant skeptic who doesn't know what he's talking about—so untrusting they were of "elite" learning.[322]

We need but ask: How would a myth be exploded in antiquity? They had no newspapers, telephones, photographs, or access to public documents to consult to check a story. There were no reporters, coroners, forensic scientists, or even detectives. If someone was not a witness, all people had was a man's word, and they would most likely base their judgment not on anything we would call evidence, but on the display of sincerity by the storyteller, by his ability to persuade, and impress them with a show, by the potential rewards his story had to offer, and by its "sounding right" to them. Thus, Paul could demonstrate any point he wanted by simply articulating a clever proof from a reinterpretation of scripture, or, failing that, all he had to do was claim a revelation from God. No other evidence really mattered—clearly, since he never uses any other.[323] In times like these, legends had it easy.

7.2. Comparable Legends in Antiquity

Webster's College Dictionary defines "legend" as "a nonhistorical or unverifiable story handed down by tradition from earlier times and popularly accepted as historical." The word itself originates from the accounts of miracles performed by saints, which were called in Latin *legenda*, "lessons to be read," usually on the day of each saint. Which brings us to a most appropriate example: In 520 CE an anonymous monk recorded the life of Saint Genevieve, who died only ten years earlier. His tale records all sorts of incredible things: how, when she ordered a cursed tree cut down, monsters sprang from it and breathed a fatal stench on many men for two hours; how, while

she was sailing, eleven ships capsized, but at her prayers they were suddenly righted again; how she cast out demons, calmed storms, miraculously created water and oil from nothing before astonished crowds, healed the blind and lame; and how several people who stole things from her actually *went* blind instead.[324] No one wrote anything to contradict or challenge these claims, and they were written very near the time the events supposedly happened, by a religious man whom we suppose regarded lying to be a sin. Yet do we believe any of it? Not really. And we shouldn't. So no one can doubt that the most fabulous of legends can arise and win the day, eclipsing any contrary historical fact, within a single generation.

As I said earlier, we can see this even in Herodotus, who reports that between 480 and 479 BCE the temple of Delphi magically defended itself with animated armaments, lightning bolts, and collapsing cliffs, a pseudo-historical event that makes an 'empty tomb' look quite boring by comparison.[325] There is no record of anyone challenging this story, despite the fact that it happened literally at the very center of what was then the most advanced and literate civilization in the entire Mediterranean. A parody of Herodotus's opening chapters in the *Acharnians* of Aristophanes (515ff.) establishes a solid *terminus ante quem* of 425 BCE for the *Histories*. By then the marvelous story of the defenses of Delphi would have been barely fifty-five years old, a span of time comparable to the arrival of the post-Markan Gospels (fifty-five years from the death of Jesus brings us to around 85–90 CE). Since Herodotus claims he got his stories from those who lived during the war, and their children, it is likely the Delphi legend was comparable to the empty tomb in rate of development: in other words, within two generations.[326] And this is not an isolated example. Herodotus records many equivalent legends from the Persian Wars, among them: the sacred olive tree of Athens, which had been burned by the Persians, grew a new shoot an arm's length in a single day; a miraculous flood tide wiped out an entire Persian contingent after they had desecrated an image of Poseidon; a horse gave birth to a rabbit; and the Chersonesians witnessed a mass resurrection of cooked fish.[327] How trivial an "empty tomb" must seem by comparison!

We have comparable examples even within the very same century that saw the development of the Gospels. Josephus wrote the *Jewish War* between 75 and 79 CE, in which he relates the following obvious legends, which "occurred" only ten to fifteen years previous (in or around 66 CE): it was as

bright as midday for half an hour around the Altar and Sanctuary of the Jerusalem Temple—at three in the morning!; during the usual sacrifices a cow gave birth to a lamb "in the middle of the Temple courts"; a bronze gate, requiring twenty men to move, unbolted, unlocked, and opened itself at midnight—right in front of the temple guards!; and last but not least, chariots and armies were seen marching through the skies and encircling all the towns of Judaea. Josephus finally remarks, "I would have dismissed it as an invention, had it not been vouched for by eyewitnesses, and followed by disasters that bore out the signs."[328]

These legends in Herodotus and Josephus are no more incredible than an empty tomb. Indeed, they are comparable to it, since they, too, have symbolic significance, and were not only "witnessed" by many people, but occurred during the lives of witnesses still living. And just as Herodotus simply "reports what was told him" and just as Josephus believed his accounts because they were "justified" by subsequent events (a rationale no historian would accept today), so could a Christian easily come to believe the tomb was really empty because, after all, doesn't a resurrection imply that very thing? And isn't that what Mark *said* happened? Once the metaphor was lost on its audience, or no longer acceptable to their ideological agenda, all bets were off. That is why the esoteric doctrine of Paul is nowhere to be seen in the appearance traditions of the Gospels. So we know it had been forgotten or transformed by then, paving the way for a different conception of what happened to the body of Christ. So long as these authors seemed sincere, and said what was agreeable, and their advocates could perform enough miracles to confirm their authority, their stories would be believed—at least by enough people to comprise a powerful church community.

Even today examples can be found, despite the soil being so less hospitable. Consider the Roswell legend.[329] There are still people today who believe that in 1947 an alien craft crashed and was recovered, along with alien bodies, by the United States government, and that this was subsequently covered up and kept secret. Though the "core story" of a saucer crash arose immediately in 1947, the elaborations began to appear as early as 1978, when an eyewitness, Maj. Jesse Marcel, described the recovery of the spacecraft in an interview. He never recanted his story, and since then the legend has grown enormously, with numerous devoted believers. This represents a clear case of a legendary development only thirty years after the fact, with all

the subsequent additions to the legend (alien bodies, government threats against witnesses, storage of the craft on a military base in Arizona, physics-defying pieces of debris, and so on) arising less than fifty years after the fact, less than twenty years after the first legendary development. Even though modern literacy, skepticism, and technology have made it possible to expose this legend with copious evidence, thousands *still believe it*.

Imagine if a promise of eternal life to a miserably oppressed and suffering underclass had been attached to this story, along with promises of a perfectly vicious revenge on their enemies and oppressors. Imagine that an army of the most fanatic of those who believe the story actively promoted this creed, seeing every attempt to stop them as part of the government's conspiracy, confident that their own suffering and death would be rewarded and their torturers and murderers duly punished in the end. Imagine that, like many Pentecostals today, these people could "prove" their doctrine's truth by performing miraculous healings and handlings of snakes, and adducing scriptures that support them. With only a little luck, could such a religion really fail to triumph?

The analogy here with the empty tomb story is strong. It turns out that the *genuine* historical core is that a weather balloon carrying top-secret nuclear-detonation detectors (actually modified sonar buoys) fell from the sky over Roswell, was recovered by an unknowing crew involving Marcel, and really was subsequently "covered up" by the Air Force. Yet this historical core was obliterated within a small group of believers and entirely replaced by the legend of alien spacecraft. If their oral tradition had just happened to be the only one to survive in print, then we would have virtually no way at all to debunk this myth—we would not even know whether it *was* a myth.

The only reason we know the truth in this case is because our society provides enormous resources to an investigator: huge amounts of government records accessible to anyone, a national mass media system, skeptical organizations dedicated to hunting down and publishing testimony and evidence, plus books, libraries, newspapers, universal literacy, and so on. None of this was available in antiquity. Yet even if it were we could still expect the Roswell belief to flourish among many people, just as it has done today. And if such a corruption of historical tradition, the replacement of a genuine historical core with an elaborate legend, can arise in so short a time, and be believed by so many, on little more than hearsay and speculation, becoming transformed by

believers into "historical fact," then certainly the same thing could have happened to the empty tomb story. All it would have taken is one Jesse Marcel to get the ball rolling, no matter what his reasons for telling the story, and no matter when he had decided to tell it. Indeed, our present inability to destroy the myth, and to convince believers to reject it, only goes to show that any comparable attempts in antiquity could not have been any more effective.

Mark is our Jesse Marcel. Like Marcel, Mark fabricated a tale—even if with entirely righteous intentions—within thirty years (1947 to 1978 = c. 30–40 CE to c. 60–70 CE), and this tale became accepted as "fact" by one group of people less than twenty years later (1978 to 1998 = c. 60–70 CE to c. 80–90 CE). And if it happened for Roswell, it would be far easier for Christianity. Not only was the soil far richer for it, as we've seen, but by the time Mark wrote, and certainly by the time his text came to be read at all widely, most if not all of those who could plausibly rebut him were dead. This is because, in contrast to the Roswell case, two intervening events eliminated both witnesses and evidence: the Neronian executions of 64 CE, and the Jewish War, which had wreaked a decisive devastation upon the original Jerusalem Church in 70 CE. Jerusalem itself was destroyed (thus eliminating any access to whatever physical evidence there could have been), and most of the population of Judaea was slaughtered or sold off to slavery in foreign nations. To make matters even worse, what became the victorious Christian sect eventually destroyed or let vanish almost all records and texts from sects that it disagreed with. (Imagine if the Roswell believers had the ability to destroy or leave to rot all evidence or writings against their belief!)

So no reasonable claim can be made that legendary development of an empty tomb story is implausible. Mark's "empty tomb" account cannot be regarded as historical with any more confidence than his claim that at Christ's death the whole land was covered by darkness for three hours or that the Temple curtain miraculously tore in two.[330] Neither claim is corroborated in other texts, which could not have failed to record them, and so neither claim is credible. Josephus would surely have mentioned the tearing of the temple curtain (for if Mark could know of it, surely Josephus would have), as would many historians of that region and period who, though their works are no longer extant, could have been eagerly quoted by later Christian apologists and historians. Likewise, a miraculous eclipse could not have failed to find mention in the *Natural History* of Pliny or the *Natural Questions*

of Seneca, or the *Almagest* of Ptolemy, or the works of Tacitus or Suetonius, or again any number of other authors no longer extant, who would still have been eagerly sought out and quoted by later writers. But like the empty tomb, these two "wonders" have obvious symbolic and metaphorical *meaning*, so it is not even necessary to suppose Mark imagined himself as writing history when he added them. As easily as he could add them, he could add the empty tomb, and for all the same reasons. And as later Christians began to believe Mark was reporting those events as history, they could just as easily come to believe the empty tomb was history, too.

7.3. Failure of the Argument from Silence

The idea latent within the challenge of Craig and Sherwin-White is that while a legend grows, the true account of events will also survive, permitting us to "see" a legend for what it is. That was certainly the gist of Sherwin-White's one example from Herodotus. But as we saw, a great many counter-examples can be adduced, of legends growing without any hint of the "true accounts" surviving alongside them. This is because, unlike today, very little got recorded in writing in antiquity, and of that little, very little came into the hands of later writers, and of that, very little again survived the intervening two thousand years, in its entirety or in quotation, for us to consult today. Consequently, a vast quantity of "facts" remain forever lost to us, making it all but impossible to say something like ("we have no record of anyone challenging a story, therefore the story must be true.") It was already unlikely that any such record would be made, even for a story widely known to be false, and even less likely that such a record would come to anyone's attention decades later, and even more unlikely that any text preserving such a record would still be around now. This is all the more certain for Judaea in the first century, for which we now have only a single historian, Josephus, whose interests and subject were already limited. Yet even for Rome, for which we have numerous historians and inscriptions, countless dubious claims remain unchallenged in the surviving record.

The basic form here is the argument from silence. Opponents of my theory would point out that no sources dispute the empty tomb story, and this silence argues against legend. Does this argument hold water? No. Gilbert Garraghan explains:

> To be valid, the argument from silence must fulfill two conditions: the writer whose silence is invoked in proof of the non-reality of an alleged fact, would certainly have known about it had it been a fact; [and] knowing it, he would under the circumstances certainly have made mention of it. When these two conditions are fulfilled, the argument from silence proves its point with moral certainty.[331]

This is a slam dunk case. But a relatively weaker deployment is possible, to the extent that either condition is less certain. So it may only be "somewhat certain" that the relevant authors knew the fact and would mention it, in which case this argument can produce a "somewhat certain" conclusion. In a more general form: based on the hypothesized fact itself, and in conjunction with everything we know on abundant, reliable evidence, should we expect to have evidence of that fact? If the answer is yes, and yet no such evidence appears, then an argument from silence is strong. If the answer is no, then it is weak.

Are there any authors still extant who would have known there was no empty tomb, and who would have challenged Mark's claim that there was one? No. Not a single author who would know the truth survives. Mark is alone in the mid-first century. Paul apparently died before Mark wrote, so would not have occasion to challenge a legend that didn't yet exist—and even if Mark wrote in his lifetime, Paul never knew of his book or its story (as is clear from Paul's letters), and even if he did, he would likely have taken it as it was probably intended: symbolic allegory and not historical truth. All the same can be said of the other epistles, whose dates are unknown. No other Christian writer appears on record until the later Gospels (c. 80–90 CE) and the first letter of Clement of Rome (c. 96 CE), and none of those authors can be established as a witness, so they could not really have challenged the story even if they wanted to—and they didn't.

What about the enemies of Christianity? Wouldn't they want to explode the myth? Indeed, if they cared at all, they would want to explode the entire religion, and every claim in it, and would have done so even with lies and fabrications, if there was no truth to be had for it.[332] Yet not a single attack on Christianity is known until the second century. Thus, either no one in-the-know cared to write such an attack (thus taking their knowledge with them to the grave), or they did, and it was lost or suppressed. Either way, we cannot expect an attack on the empty tomb legend to survive, since *no* attacks on *any* Christian claims survive.

We can be doubly certain of this, since by the time the 'legend' was starting to be promoted as "fact" (perhaps in the 90s CE), there would not likely have been any witnesses around to contest it. Not only did sixty years intervene, and few lived so long as that, much less the seventy or eighty years needed to have been "there" at the foundational event, but, as we noted earlier, a major persecution and a monumentally devastating war also intervened, probably destroying many if not all of those present at the founding. It only makes things worse that all written attacks on Christianity have been suppressed, in every century, including those of Celsus, Porphyry, Hierocles, and Julian—all were destroyed by the Church and are known only in the quotations of Christian authors who rebutted them. How many other critiques were written that we don't know anything about? In just the same way, all the writings of those first-century sects who denied the resurrection of the flesh have also been suppressed, and so any "evidence" or "witness" they might have provided was also lost.[333] Consequently, an argument from silence against an empty tomb legend cannot succeed.

This remains so even with the additional argument that we have no evidence that Christ's tomb was venerated. For the site of the greatest miracle in history, in which God Incarnate himself once rested, would have been venerated even if empty—indeed, *especially* then. So absence of evidence for veneration is mysterious on *any* theory of events and consequently cannot be used to favor one theory over another. Christ's tomb, empty or not, would be no less ripe for veneration than the pots of Cana, the tomb of Lazarus, the locus of the Lord's baptism, the nativity manger, the withered fig tree, the site of the transfiguration, or any of a dozen other wondrous sites. Yet we have no evidence *any* such places were venerated. At the same time, there is a lot we don't know about the early Jerusalem Church and its rituals and practices. Paul tells us almost nothing whatsoever. So it is entirely possible the tomb *was* venerated, but was forgotten after the destruction of the Jewish War. But this question may be moot. My theory of events entails that the corpse of Jesus was regarded as mere rubbish, since he lived in a new body now, so venerating his bones would have made little sense to the early Christians—who were expecting the end of the world to come so very soon that venerating anything may have seemed to them like pointless idolatry.

7.4. The Problem of Ignorance

Someone might object that I have no likely prospect of explaining, in terms of legendary or symbolic development, every curious detail of the resurrection narratives, nor do I have any direct "proof" that legendary embellishment is at play. But these objections are outweighed by one crucial reality: the historical record for antiquity is enormously thin. Rarely can we expect to uncover a legend by finding "the truth," since a great many legends survive from antiquity while the actual facts behind them do not. Indeed, if we were to make a reckoning of all the stories told in extant sources, legends would likely outweigh the truth, and most of those legends would be all we have left concerning the time, place, and people they claim to be about. So, quite often, legends can only be exposed indirectly. And this means the lack of direct evidence cannot be used to argue *against* a story being a legend, at least not in the context of ancient history.

At the same time, this sparseness of the historical record thwarts *everyone's* ability to fully understand these narratives. A great many facts would have been known to the people of the time that have since become lost to us. So the way a text was interpreted and understood might have been radically different than we can presently reconstruct, given such blurry hindsight. One example should suffice to illustrate my point. In Plutarch's biography of Romulus, the Founder of Rome, we are told about annual public ceremonies that were still being performed, which celebrated the day Romulus ascended to heaven.[334] The sacred story told at this event went basically as follows: at the end of his life, amidst rumors he was murdered by a conspiracy of the Senate (and dismembered, just like the resurrected deities Osiris and Bacchus), a darkness covered the earth, thunder and wind struck, and Romulus vanished, leaving no part of his body or clothes behind; the people wanted to search for him but the Senate told them not to, "for he had been taken up to the gods"; most people then went away happy, hoping for good things from their new god, but "some doubted"; later, Proculus, a close friend of Romulus, reported that he met him "on the road," and asked him, "Why have you abandoned us?" to which Romulus replied that he had been a god all along, but had come down to earth to establish a great kingdom and now had to return to his home in heaven; then Romulus told his friend to tell the Romans that if they are virtuous they will achieve a great empire.

Plutarch tells us that the Roman ceremony of the Romulan ascent involved a recitation of the names of those who fled his vanishing in fear, and the acting out of their fear and flight in public, a scene so obviously a parallel to Mark's ending of his Gospel that nearly anyone would have noticed—and gotten the point. Indeed, Livy's account, just like Mark's, *emphasizes* that "fear and bereavement" kept the people "silent for a long time," and only later did they proclaim Romulus "God, Son of God, King, and Father."[335]

Now, just imagine how much Plutarch *hasn't* told us about this annual event and the story it conveyed—he is, after all, only summarizing—then realize how many *other* sacred ceremonies and stories were popularized then that *no* extant author has recorded for us. And yet, already, the Romulan celebration looks astonishingly like a skeletal model for the passion narrative: a great man, founder of a great kingdom, is actually an incarnated god, but dies as a result of a conspiracy of the ruling council, then a darkness covers the land and his body vanishes, at which we flee in fear, like the Gospel women, and like them, too, we look for his body but are told he is not here, he has risen—ascended to heaven—and, as in Matthew, some doubt, but then, as in Luke, we encounter the risen god on a road, where the truth is revealed. There are many differences, surely. But the similarities are too numerous to be a coincidence. It certainly looks like the Christian passion narrative is a deliberate transvaluation of the Roman Empire's ceremony of their founding savior's incarnation, death, and resurrection.

Certainly, a reader of that day would not fail to see the connection, and interpret the story accordingly. Other elements have been added to the Gospels—the story heavily Judaized, and many other symbols and motifs pulled in to transform it—and the narrative has been modified, in structure and content, to suit the Christians' own spiritual and didactic agenda. But the basic structure is clearly not original. How many other stories and events would have illuminated, and could have inspired, nearly every detail of the Gospels, if only a record of them had survived? How differently would we now understand the story, if only we had all the facts that were available to its readers then? How, then, can we trust any of the Gospels to preserve a genuine history? And even if they do, somewhere behind layers of symbolism and embellishment and structural invention, how on earth are we supposed to tell the difference? How do we sort truth from symbol? Christ from Romulus?

My point here is not so much that we can't trust a word of it, but that

no one can say we have to. There is clearly much more here than meets the eye. The issue is not even remotely clear-cut, nor likely to be solved by anyone. Many secret meanings and motives have surely been lost to us forever. The difficulty that I face, of trying to decipher the hidden point behind the stories, the layers and sequences of embellishment and modification, the motives of the authors, or their sources, is exactly the same difficulty faced by anyone who wants to claim I am wrong: our mutual and undeniable ignorance undermines *everyone's* certainty. And for that very reason, legend is a far more credible possibility than many would like to admit.

7.5. Assessment

I have shown that the culture and time were especially suitable for the rise of a legend, that many comparable legends arose with the same speed of development, that we cannot expect any challenge to an empty tomb legend to have survived, and that our pervasive ignorance makes legend even more likely. Therefore, my theory that the "empty tomb" is a legend is plausible. But do we have any evidence it was *probable*? To that we now turn.

8. THE APPEARANCE TRADITION AS EVIDENCE OF LEGEND

On my theory, Christianity began from what were believed to be spiritual epiphanies of the risen Christ. If the Gospels support this tradition more firmly than the alternative (resurrection of Jesus in the flesh), this will stand as positive evidence in favor of my theory. To this we would add the evidence from the Epistles and the content of Mark's story, which I have already presented. Together, these three analyses corroborate each other and consequently make it probable the empty tomb is a legend.

So what of the appearance tradition? Spiritual epiphany was commonplace in antiquity, and it often took the form of bodily "visitations" from gods and spirits. Dozens of examples can be found in extant sources, but the following is typical:

> I would very much like to know whether you think ghosts exist and have their own form and any divine power, or come as visions, empty and unreal,

> out of our own fear. I myself am led to believe they exist especially because of what I hear happened to Curtius Rufus. Still unknown and obscure, he was a staff member attached to the governor of Africa. One day he was strolling up and down the portico and the figure of a woman appeared to him, larger and more beautiful than a human being. Though he was frightened, she said she was Africa, harbinger of future things, for he would return to Rome and hold office, and then with supreme authority return to the same province, and there he would die. It all happened. Moreover, it is related that as he arrived in Carthage and disembarked from his ship the same figure appeared on the shore.[336]

Pliny expresses concern whether the spirit of Africa that appeared to Rufus was a substantial, divine being, or merely a hallucination. As usual, fear typifies the encounter, which is recognized as supernatural because of its paranormal qualities (sudden appearance, glorious visage—like the descriptions of angels at the tomb in the Gospels), and Pliny rules out hallucination because the ghost's predictions came true. Significantly, the question of flesh and blood is not relevant—if the ghost was really the goddess Africa, she would not be made of flesh but would have an "appropriately numinous form" (*propriam figuram numenque aliquod*).[337] That does not make her less divine, less powerful, less portentious, or less miraculous, but *more* so. And such would be anyone else's view in that time. This was true even of deified men, whose bones could lie on earth even as they continued to act as newly embodied gods. Two prime examples are Osiris, whose bones were buried in several tombs on earth even as he was continually reembodied in heaven, and Theseus, who rose from the dead to fight at Marathon (which obviously required a physical, substantial presence), yet his bones remained on a faraway island still buried, to be recovered after the war.[338]

Almost all divine manifestations on record take place in either of two forms: the God appears in an "obviously" supernatural body, or in disguise. Gods were widely believed to appear in hidden form, to "test" us. These visitations seem like ordinary encounters with ordinary people, maybe even people we know.[339] When the Gospels depict Jesus in this hidden role, readers of the day would have understood the meaning at once. On the other hand, in visitations like those of Theseus, Africa, even the roadside encounter with the divine Romulus, the god *appears* supernatural, often dazzling or bigger than life. Yet the risen Jesus of the Gospels does not. The only sign

left of his supernatural status is his sudden appearing and vanishing, also a commonplace for visions of the divine (and thus probably why he is given that power). But why have his supernatural properties been reduced only to teleportation? I think I have made an adequate case that Luke and John (and possibly Matthew), want to establish Jesus as risen in the *flesh*, which entails eliminating the expected "glorious" enhancements to a divine appearance that we see in other epiphanies. Jesus looks normal because he *has* to. Anything else would undermine their belief in the nature of his risen body. But some signature of divinity had to be retained, so the Gospel authors resorted to the only standard motif left. Meanwhile, the original stories could have been remembered more like the angelic encounters of the Gospels, and this detail suppressed.

Whatever the case, both hidden gods and bodily gods were encountered all the time in the ancient world—actually seen, actually spoken to, and actually believed to be real and solid. But few today would regard these encounters as genuine. There is no goddess Africa, no resurrected Romulus. Or surely, if it is your intention to claim so, you have a pretty heavy burden to meet if you want to make your case. This is the context we must embrace when we examine the Christian appearance tradition.

8.1. Hallucination in Concept

I believe the best explanation, consistent with both scientific findings and the surviving evidence (particular to Christianity *and* the general cultural milieu in which it arose), is that the first Christians experienced hallucinations of the risen Christ, of one form or another. I have discussed what the nature of those experiences might have been like in section 5.9 above, and will say more below. But first something more should be said about religious experience in antiquity and the concept of "hallucination."[340]

Vivid experiences of a hallucinatory nature are well documented across all religious traditions, throughout history, and it even appears the human brain is specifically wired to have them.[341] But a central factor is culture. In the ancient world, to experience supernatural manifestations, of ghosts, gods, and wonders was not only accepted, but often encouraged, and consequently hallucination occurred more often and more openly—most people of that time were enculturated to have them, respect them, and believe them.[342]

This is no longer the case. To report "seeing things" is to invite the stigma of mental disease or incompetence and subsequent social rejection or mistreatment. Consequently, from as early as childhood most people now are enculturated *not* to have hallucinatory experiences. So they occur far less often, are rarely reported when they do, and even when they are reported, most percipients today interpret them more skeptically than in ancient societies. These days, children after a certain age are strongly discouraged from continuing to play with their imaginary friends, or talking to trees, or being scared of the closet monster, and are told there is no Santa Claus, no faeries or demons, and that only fools would disagree—all this tunes the brain to behave accordingly in adulthood. Thus, we cannot draw conclusions about ancient hallucinations from present experience.

Yet Peter Slade and Richard Bentall have shown that hallucination is *still* fairly commonplace—over the last century, between 7 and 14 percent of people surveyed, who did *not* exhibit any mental illness, reported having experienced hallucinations, and this sample naturally did not record those who had them but did not know it.[343] Of these identified experiences, over 8 percent were multisensory hallucinations, and 5 percent involved entire conversations. Slade and Bentall conclude that "many more people at least have the capability to hallucinate than a strictly medical model implies should be the case" (p. 76). Indeed, I would have to include myself in their numbers. In addition to a vivid Taoist mystical experience of an obviously hallucinatory nature,[344] there was a night when I fought with a demon trying to crush my chest—the experience felt absolutely real, and I was certainly awake, probably in a hypnagogic state. I could see and feel the demon sitting on me, preventing me from breathing, but when I "punched" it, it vanished. It is all the more remarkable that I have never believed in demons, and the creature I saw did not resemble anything I had ever seen or imagined before. So what was it? Supernatural encounter or hallucination? You decide.

Slade and Bentall found that social and cultural factors can increase the frequency and acceptance of hallucinations. Of 488 societies surveyed, 62 percent accepted some form of hallucinated experiences as real (such as being visited by the dead, or talking to animals or trees), and the majority of these were not induced by drugs (p. 77). In a particularly interesting case, one study found that 40 percent of Hawaiian natives reported veridical encounters and conversations with dead people, usually after violation of a tribal

taboo (p. 78). This study was inspired by a few clinical cases of such hauntings, which therapists could not cure. They investigated the cultural influences behind the experiences, and after their findings they resolved to cure the problem by leading the victims to engage in culturally established atonements, which were expected to end the visits. And they did. But surely, violating Hawaiian tribal taboos does not *really* cause the dead to rise and chastise people. Obviously hallucination is a far more plausible explanation.

Slade and Bentall also found that visual hallucinations are rare in Western cultures, but not in many others—especially developing countries, which have more in common with the ancient world. Hence "the folk theory of visions and voices adopted by a culture may be important in determining whether a hallucination is viewed as veridical or as evidence of insanity" (p. 80). Thus, "medieval writings on insanity make few references to hallucination and instead take overt evidence of disturbed behavior (e.g., babbling, wandering aimlessly, thrashing, biting) as diagnostic of madness," and yet many medieval reports of visions regarded as real match modern visions reported by those with a psychotic disorder (p. 80). As Slade and Bentall conclude, "we must seek the causes of hallucination, at least in part, in the social and historical environment of the hallucinator" (p. 81). When we look at the cultural situation in antiquity, we see exactly the same circumstances: hallucinations are rarely mentioned as evidence of insanity, but visions of the deceased and of gods and all sorts of other things are accepted as real.

According to Slade and Bentall, "hallucinations involving bereavement" are particularly common—and, for example, visits by the dead to the bereaved are culturally accepted as genuine in Hopi Indian culture (pp. 86–88).[345] Finally, they found evidence that hallucination plays a role in reducing anxiety, and this anxiety-relieving property in turn has a reinforcing effect on the believability and frequency of hallucination (p. 108). These two factors fit the situation of the disciples after the crucifixion fairly well. They were primed for hallucination by their bereavement, their anxiety-filled circumstances, their cultural predisposition to see and believe things that confirmed their deepest desires in religious terms, and other factors, including social influence and suggestion.[346] Apart from drugs, hypnosis, or deprivation, you simply can't get better circumstances for hallucination than these, unless you add hypnagogia (an altered state of consciousness that occurs while waking or falling asleep) or trance states (often

induced by fasting, fatigue, marathon praying, and other ascetic activities), both prime instigators of hallucination. Yet we cannot rule out such factors in the case of the original visions, since the tradition has been altered, and lacks sufficient details.[347]

Of course, one can still ask "Why Paul?" He wasn't among the disciples and experienced Jesus much later than they did. So what brought about his revelation? We can never really know for sure—Paul tells us precious little. But I can hypothesize four conjoining factors: guilt at persecuting a people he came to admire; subsequent disgust with fellow persecuting Pharisees; and persuasion (beginning to see what the Christians were seeing in scripture, and to worry about his own salvation); coupled with the right physical circumstances (like heat and fatigue on a long, desolate road), could have induced a convincing ecstatic event—his unconscious mind producing what he really wanted: a reason to believe the Christians were right after all and atone for his treatment of them, and a way to give his life meaning, by relocating himself from the lower, even superfluous periphery of Jewish elite society, to a place of power and purpose.[348]

We can add to this the possibility of benevolent mental disorder. We know there is a kind of "happy schizotype" who is "a relatively well-adjusted person who is functional despite, and in some cases even because of, his or her anomalous perceptual experiences."[349] This unites the role of hallucination as an anxiety reducer with the sociocultural acceptance of hallucination and explains two other features of antiquity: why there were few reported cases of psychosis (and why hallucination was not regarded as a major index of insanity), and why miracles and visions were so frequently reported (not just Christian, but pagan as well). It is entirely possible that cultural support and psychological benefits led borderline schizophrenics into comfortable situations where their visions were channeled into "appropriate" and respected religious contexts. Indeed, we would expect these "happy schizotypes" to find their most accepted place in religious avocations, and they would naturally gravitate into the entourage of miracle workers. So is it perhaps telling that Mary, the first to get the ball rolling, might have been mildly psychotic?[350]

For all these reasons, hallucination cannot be ruled out as a possible origin of the Christian religion. Even today people have "visions" of Jesus just like those in the New Testament. Phillip Wiebe documents numerous full-body appearances of Jesus, many involving physical contact, physically

affecting the environment, even mass experiences; many involved conversation, and almost all were sudden and unexpected. Wiebe concludes: "The sharp distinction between NT appearances and visions commonly made by Christian theologians is questionable."[351] One wonders how a Christian can explain these encounters—Jesus could not have descended incarnate, for that would be the *Parousia*. Did they see, talk to, even touch the very same body that left the tomb two thousand years ago? Or did they just hallucinate, like the Hawaiians and the Hopi, or me in my battle with a demon? Surely the latter is a more credible explanation—or at the very least, a strong contender. Yet these people understood their experience as bodily and real. The original visions of Jesus may have been much like these, just as unexpected, just as moving, just as convincing.

8.2. Analysis of the Traditions

The first mention of appearances of the risen Christ arose a few decades after the event, in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, which we analyzed above (in section 5.9). There the experience seems clearly to have been a spiritual revelation and not an encounter with a flesh and bone Jesus. We hear nothing after that until the Gospels after Mark. Mark never wrote anything about an appearance of Jesus, except a vague allusion to some sort of appearance that would be forthcoming in Galilee, which could merely be a reference to the first revelation to Peter or the twelve disciples and not to any bodily encounter.[352] The following narrative (Mark 16:9–20) describing appearances is a late invention, tacked onto the original ending of Mark, by someone who essentially adapted material from John and Luke.[353] So this forgery is so completely derivative it is not worth examining. But since it retains no material inconsistent with encountering a second numinous body, it offers no real support for resurrection of the flesh anyway.

After Mark, there arose essentially two different appearance traditions: that found in Matthew, and that found in Luke and John. Luke and John both place the first appearances in or around Jerusalem, and *not* in Galilee.[354] This is strange, since the only reference Mark makes to the appearances is that they will take place in Galilee, and Matthew accordingly places the most central appearance event exactly there. The fact that Luke and John fundamentally contradict the tradition of Matthew and Mark argues against the

authenticity of the tradition they preserve. Matthew even places the focal experience outdoors, whereas John (and possibly Luke) places it indoors, another fundamental discrepancy. Although John places one appearance event outdoors and in Galilee, he does so only by redacting a story that actually occurred *before* the death of Jesus, which makes this added account highly suspect.[355] Even more suspiciously, this occurs in a section of John that seems to be a second ending appended to the original Gospel.[356]

8.3. The Matthaean Tradition

But first Matthew, whose appearance account is the simplest: an angelic epiphany reveals that Jesus is raised and will appear in Galilee; then Jesus appears to Mary (and other women) while they are on their way to tell the disciples; Jesus repeats what the angel said; then the disciples are finally informed and go where they were told, and they see Jesus on a mountain, where he gives them their commission.[357] Three details stick out here. First, the Moses parallel is hardly concealed: Jesus is here the new Moses on the new Sinai, delivering the new Covenant. Matthew began his Gospel by equating Jesus with Moses in the infancy flight to Egypt. So Matthew's appearance narrative is as stylized and symbolic as his empty tomb account, which typed Jesus as Daniel, again tying this ending in with the beginning of his Gospel, this time through the visit of the magi.[358] Second, "Those seeing him worshiped, but some doubted."[359] Thus, Matthew emphasizes the fact that the epiphany was not convincing to everyone. Maintaining the Moses parallel, this perhaps reflects those doubters whom Moses had to order killed at Sinai, and so people who were not convinced by the epiphanies are thus being branded as both wicked and doomed.[360] Third, the only content of this narrative that implies flesh is the fact that the women "took hold" of Christ's feet when they worshiped his apparition.

This last point is the only challenge. Of course, the appearance to Mary does not seem consistent with Mark, is not corroborated by Paul, and is internally superfluous, since Jesus merely repeats the instructions that Mary was already in the process of following. So it may be a didactic invention. By saying the women "grabbed his feet and worshipped," Matthew duplicates key vocabulary in the Psalm of Ascent,[361] wherein one is called to seek a "tabernacle" (*skênôma*) for God, to enter his tabernacle, and to worship at his feet.

The very next verse beseeches God to "rise up" (using the verb of resurrection: *anistêmi*) into his resting place. Then we are told God will give us instructions that bring salvation (vv. 12–13). The meaning in context is startlingly clear, and links this appearance narrative to Pauline resurrection theology: this is a passage about seeking God's body, painting the Lord's resurrection as an ascension to heaven, into his new body, into which he also calls *us*. At the same time, this psalm looks forward to Matthew's own narrative: the coming instruction in salvation. This cannot be a coincidence.

This may nevertheless embellish what was originally a real event, but the version we have in Matthew is narratively consistent with a new body, and thus it cannot be supposed that Matthew's source was a Sarcicist. The contact with feet is probably a didactic or dramatic embellishment in a description of a purely revelatory episode. It is also possible it relates an actual hallucinatory experience (grabbing stones upon the ground, the recipients of the vision could easily have "seen" this as grabbing the feet of their visitor), but we need not assume this. Either way, the passage offers no proof that Matthew's appearance tradition derives from any real encounter with a flesh-and-bone Jesus. It is entirely concordant with, for example, Rufus's encounter with Africa. In sum, the appearance tradition in Matthew is highly stylized and yet consistent with Pauline resurrection doctrine. Of course, if it originates entirely with Matthew, it is entirely false as well. But if Matthew is drawing on or reworking any actual appearance tradition, then that tradition contained no real support for a resurrection of the flesh, and thus could have originated with Christianity itself, without contradicting my theory.

8.4. The Lucan Tradition

Then comes the Luke-John tradition, the latter being to some extent an embellishment on the former. Examine Luke: again, an angelic epiphany begins the whole process—witnesses first learn that Christ is raised from *this*, and it is *this* that originates belief in his resurrection.[362] Was the original angel Jesus in disguise? For Luke later has Jesus appear "in disguised form" to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, who only "recognize" him after he breaks bread with them, apparently not by actually seeing "Jesus," but by deduction alone.[363] That he became *aphantos* from them is sometimes translated as "he vanished from them," which might be what Luke means, but it

can also mean he "became hidden from them," i.e., they recognized Jesus in the man they were with but then no longer saw Jesus in their guest.

Either way, in this story Jesus physically broke their bread for them. But this clearly fits within the surrounding cultural paradigm of the "disguised" god (which often involved the serving of meals, to test a family's hospitality). So a mundane event could easily have been "interpreted" as a visitation, and subsequently embellished with soteriological details (like the scripture lesson, and perhaps the vanishing). Though it is possible to hallucinate the breaking of bread (with the hosts actually breaking it but "seeing" their guest do so), and though it is also possible the entire encounter was originally a dream, it just as easily fits the paradigm of a mystical reinterpretation of the ordinary—or wholesale mythic fabrication. As shown earlier, the Emmaus account might derive from a popular tale of a roadside meeting with the risen Romulus. Like Africa in Pliny's letter, Romulus, too, had a superhuman appearance, but Luke inverts the story, and turns the encounter into a hidden-god narrative.[364] But the underlying meaning is the same.

Then Jesus appears a second time, this time for real, to all the disciples—the only event comparable to what Mark implied, Paul declared, and Matthew described. First Jesus appears right as the disciples are being told that he had already been "seen."[365] Thus Luke uses the Emmaus event above to eliminate the role of Mary and the women in Mark and Matthew. In fact, the total eclipse of the female role is completed by the introduction of a visit to the empty tomb by Peter and other disciples.[366] Luke's narrative now becomes overtly polemical: the disciples are "terrified" because he might be a spirit (even though it is not explained what would be so wrong or scary about Jesus having become a numinous spirit—it didn't bother Pliny or Paul), Jesus then (alluding to 1 Corinthians 15:35) asks them "What questions are brewing in your hearts?" He doesn't even wait for them to answer, but immediately declares that he is *not* a spirit, that he is made of flesh and bones, and invites them to see for themselves by handling his hands and feet. Luke makes a point of noting that they still don't believe him, so Jesus asks for and eats a fish to further prove his point.[367] This story becomes enormously embellished and even more overtly polemical once John gets his hands on it.[368] As I noted in my analysis of Paul (section 5.5 above) we can dismiss this appearance event, in both Gospels, as a polemical invention: it directly contradicts Paul, and Paul could not have failed to mention it if it

were true (either to cite or to attack it), and its own content betrays it as deliberate propaganda (Luke 24:37; Acts 1:3; John 20:25, 29, 31). Add the fact that Matthew and Mark also know nothing of the event, and all the evidence adduced above against the authenticity of the Luke-John appearance tradition, and there remains little credibility.

The only detail retained from the Mark-Matthew tradition is the commission: once Jesus has appeared, he gives the disciples their instructions. This may derive from a genuine epiphany tradition, especially since Luke's account agrees so well with Pauline epistemology: Jesus tells them that the truth comes from a reinterpretation of scripture, even saying that "it is written" that he be raised on the third day.[369] That probably contains a kernel of truth, the original church deriving its belief from scripture, after the first epiphanies. However, unlike Matthew, Mark, or John, Luke ends his account with a witnessed ascension to heaven (24:51; cf. Acts 1:9–11). Paul does not mention any witness to such an event, but he did create inspiration for it with his description of *our* ascension at the end of days, so Luke is probably assuming, and thus inventing, the same event for Christ.[370] So it is probably a legend, here meant not only to illustrate where Jesus went, but that he went there in the flesh (impossible to Paul), hence placing this report within the context of Sarcicist polemic.

Paul also mentioned an appearance "to more than five hundred brethren at one time," and Luke describes a visitation to a certain multitude on "the day of the Pentecost, when they were all together in one place," using curiously similar vocabulary.[371] Acts says the event happened *tês pentêkostês*, the day "of the Pentecost," while 1 Corinthians says the event involved *pentakosiois*, over "five hundred" brothers. Acts says the event occured "in the same place" (*epi to auto*); 1 Corinthians, that the event was to "more than" (*epanô*) a certain number. Acts says the event happened when *pantes homou*, "all were together"; 1 Corinthians, that the event happened *ephapax*, "all at once." The similarities seem too numerous to be a coincidence. Has Luke remodeled Paul? Or did Paul originally describe a Pentecostal appearance and *not* an appearance to "more than five hundred"? One or the other is likely true. Did Luke have a different manuscript of Paul's letter than we do, one that omitted 1 Corinthians 15:7, and had a very different wording in 15:6? If verse 15:6 originally mentioned the Pentecost event but was emended by later scribes, then it is likely that 15:7 was also interpolated, perhaps to pre-

vent Paul's limiting of principal authority to Peter and the twelve, by legitimating the authority of James (in alignment with Gal. 1:19) and an unnamed number of additional "apostles." But there can be no certainty here. Either way, if Acts 2 is not the event referred to by Paul, then we have no account at all of what Paul meant and so cannot infer anything about its nature, beyond the fact that it was like his own.

As for the purpose of Luke's importation of the Emmaus event into the narrative, it serves as a corrective to replace the vision to Mary in the Mark-Matthew tradition. Indeed, it might be the embellishment of the original, true story, like what happened to Mary according to John, who makes this "disguised god" event hers.[372] John also, like Matthew, associates her encounter with the ascension, suggesting that a true epiphany tradition lies behind all three accounts—in which some disciple interpreted an encounter with some stranger as meeting a "hidden" Christ and somehow took away from this a belief in Christ's ascension to heaven. This disciple was probably Peter, if we follow Luke 24:23 and 1 Corinthians 15:5. But if it really was Mary, Paul may have suppressed this appearance event because of his infamously low opinion of women, repeatedly insisting that they shut the hell up,[373] or the fact that it was not associated with a commission and thus not a part of the "Gospel." But it may be that the role of the "women" here is an invention of Mark, a mere act of reversing expectation, but then later authors were compelled to retain or rework it.

8.5. Assessment

This completes a survey of both appearance traditions in the Gospels. The common elements, after wiping away the polemic, propaganda, symbolism, and embellishments, are these: a vision of some mysterious kind inspires or informs someone (perhaps Peter or Mary) with the basic outline of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:3–4), and then scriptures are searched for confirmation, which of course is found, confirming their belief, and then their fervor inspires others to have similar experiences. This is the most credible historical core behind the legendary material that survives, since it is the only account that can explain all extant stories. Yet this core account does not lend support for resurrection of the flesh. Rather, it agrees completely with Pauline-style spiritual resurrection, and with Paul's own account of the ori-

gins of Christianity. In other words, the fact that the only elements of the Gospel accounts that support fleshly resurrection are the *least* credible of all the details there supports my theory.

Importantly, the core appearance tradition does not depend on an empty tomb. Appearances alone would be sufficient to produce belief, just as was the case for Paul. The Gospel authors had to relate this tradition to the empty tomb once it was invented by Mark, but the fact that every single Gospel connects the two in an entirely different way is evidence that they are fabricating, not preserving any common truth. And when we examine the Gospels as a whole, what we see is a chronology of exaggeration: from nothing more than "revelatory" experiences in Paul, to a vanished body in Mark, to a vaguely physical encounter with Jesus in Matthew, to a very physical encounter in Luke, all the way to an incredible physical encounter in John (and if we go beyond the canon, the next stage is reflected in the Gospel of Peter: actually witnessing Jesus rise from the grave). This makes it quite evident that Christianity began with postmortem dreams or visions, and then the legend grew from there, just as we see it do over time. In their efforts to embellish, the Gospel authors adopt symbolic imagery (Mark, Matthew), and insert antignostic polemic (Luke, John), but they still may have drawn on some sort of oral tradition attached to the visions cited by Paul: some common tradition about an epiphany that drew the first Christians to discover the Gospel hidden within the Old Testament.

Someone might object that almost all of these appearance events were to many people at once, and mass hallucination is improbable. However, on my theory the original appearances were revelatory epiphanies and thus objectively comparable to the visitation at the Pentecost, also a collective event, just like Paul's ideal of a church enraptured with prophecy.[374] Subjectively these experiences could still be reported as seeing an angel or the body of Christ, or as speaking to him, or hearing his voice, or feeling his presence, even his physical touch. Everyone could be persuaded to agree they were seeing the very same thing—since they would not be able to compare notes on every precise detail, nor would they always care to (and even when they did, most differences could be explained away as a difference of individual focus or perspective). Meanwhile, "anchoring" and "memory contamination" among each other, and normative "interpretation" and suggestion by an authority figure, would tend to align all their experiences and memories of

the event toward a single narrative.[375] Each would see Christ in his own way, yet all would take this as jointly seeing the same Christ.

The revelation of Christ as now raised from the dead (and other gospel basics) only took place in the beginning. It was a truth that ceased to be disclosed in later revelations, but was only preached by those apostles who had heard it. This is the only plausible reason that, afterward, this particular revelation could only be "passed on" by a human teacher.[376] That the appearances of Jesus were categorically unique cannot be the reason, since the Gospel could just as easily be conveyed by angels, and thus a categorical difference would not explain why the Gospel ceased to be conveyed by *any* subsequent revelations. So it was the *content* that set the first revelations apart, not their fundamental nature—otherwise, we would hear from Paul a lot more about them. The historical impetus was either the death of Jesus, or the first epiphany to Peter, or both. But there would soon be strong social pressure to put a cap on these founding events, to contain claims to authority.[377]

Hence Wright makes too much of the curious fact that these particular visions "stopped" with Paul (p. 329)—for that is as inexplicable on his theory as on any other. Why on earth would a God, who wanted to save all mankind, only appear to a few hundred, mostly unnamed, people and then give up? Wouldn't it be much more efficient and effective—especially for heading off the army of false gospels that even Paul had to contend with—to bypass the apostolate and just appear to everyone, or at least all the elect? The idea of a human mission is wholly illogical on the theory that Jesus was really God.[378] But it makes complete sense if the mission was a human phenomenon, bounded by social forces to exclude or deny any further claims to direct divine authority by later "pretenders," as Paul himself must have been regarded by many. Indeed, Paul was "pushing it" as far as trying to get his claim in under the wire and accepted by the central Christian authorities at Jerusalem. His unique charisma may have made the difference between success and condemnation as a fraud. The assignment of his experience as the "last" may even have been a deliberate decision of the church, for the very purpose of pulling the plug on future claims. And since other "frauds" who didn't get acknowledged by the church, or by Paul, would not end up on his "list" of authorities, we cannot be sure there weren't many more who claimed to have "seen Jesus" just as he did.

9. CONCLUSION

What does all this mean? Unfortunately I have not had the space to thoroughly address every objection to the theory I have defended throughout. An entire book would probably be needed for that. But I have presented all the evidence in favor, and to the best of my knowledge I have left no important evidence out of account. But I leave it to my critics to point out any and all significant objections that my theory must still overcome, or evidence yet to be addressed. Progress requires dialogue.

But this is where I think things stand right now: when all the evidence above is taken together, I believe we can conclude that Paul probably never heard any such stories as the Doubting Thomas episode. All the sightings of Jesus he heard about were probably just like his, and akin to Stephen's: a spiritual revelation from a Jesus enthroned in heaven.[379] Paul would not doubt the veracity of this vision, since he was culturally predisposed to take such things as seriously, even more seriously, than Thomas's touching of a risen body. Paul would not doubt he had been visited by the risen Christ, even if he knew Jesus' body was still in its grave. For Jesus was no longer in that body, a mere corrupt shell, useless dust. Jesus had been clothed in a new body in heaven, the spiritual body of the risen Christ. And so the hope of resurrection was thereby proved by Christ's example.

This theory accounts for all the facts. It preserves a core historical reality—an original belief that Jesus was resurrected into a new spiritual body, departing the "tomb" of his earthly body—and interprets the rest as legendary development, in a manner consistent with what we know of ancient history and culture. I have shown that a two-body resurrection belief among the earliest Christians is possible, plausible, and has evidential support—support even more secure than the alternative, being both earlier and better corroborated. I have shown that a visionary and scriptural origin of the original resurrection belief was possible, plausible, and has evidential support, and this support is also more secure than the alternative, as it, too, is both earlier and better corroborated. I have also shown that a subsequent legendary development of the "empty tomb" and "appearance" stories was possible, plausible, and has evidential support. On those three points alone I can conclude that this theory is the most probable account of the surviving evidence. But if we add to this the strength of an inference to naturalism (see

the introduction to my chapter on the burial of Jesus), as well as the extraordinarily low probability of a genuine resurrection (see Michael Martin's two chapters), then we have a truly strong case, and only one conclusion is justified by the evidence: Jesus is dead. There is no good reason to believe he was physically raised from the grave as later Gospels struggle to show.

Of course, a Christian does not need to believe that the Gospels record historical truth. One can confess faith in Christ's resurrection just as Paul did: on the spiritual experience of the risen Christ enthroned in heaven. After all, if it is sufficient *today*, for belief and conversion and martyrdom, that Jesus be available only in spirit, not in his flesh-and-blood body, why would a fleshy encounter have been important in the beginning? Evangelicals have no answer for this that makes any sense of contemporary Christian experience (see Ted Drange's chapter). On the other hand, Gary Habermas lists twelve "facts" that are widely accepted by contemporary scholars.[380] Yet my theory is consistent with all but one of them: the discovery of an empty tomb. And I have given ample reason to doubt that. We simply don't need it to account for any of the evidence. But in two other chapters here I have even provided credible causes for *that* detail.

The notion that Christ really was given a new body, and really did ascend to heaven, and really did communicate the message of salvation in dreams, visions, and scripture, just as he does today, is all compatible with my theory. Of course, so is the naturalist theory that this is all just a product of the same cultural and psychological phenomena found in many other religions. This would mean the truth of Christianity cannot be maintained against Naturalism on the case for Christ's bodily resurrection.

NOTES

1. For the best defense of the view that Jesus never really existed, but only represented an angelic figure whose entire life, death, and resurrection took place in the heavens, see: Earl Doherty, *The Jesus Puzzle: Did Christianity Begin with a Mythical Christ?; Challenging the Existence of an Historical Jesus*, rev. ed. (Ottawa: Canadian Humanist Publications, 2000). See also my review: "Did Jesus Exist? Earl Doherty and the Argument to Ahistoricity" (Secular Web, 2002: www.infidels.org/library/modern/richard_carrier/jesuspuzzle.shtml).

2. A position not among those considered by Stephen Davis in *Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), cf. pp. 44–45. Nor is it really addressed by N. T. Wright in his monumental work *The Resurrection of the Son of God*

(Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), hereafter cited as "Wright" with a page number—though he comes close to conceding it on p. 367.

3. My theory could also be made compatible with the idea that the tomb was *believed* empty when it really wasn't (by imagining the *transmutation* of Christ's body), but I shall not defend that view—though, contra Wright (pp. 626, 686), I must note that if the first Christians thought God himself had told them the tomb was empty, they would believe it—and probably dismiss any contrary evidence as a trick pulled by their enemies. See Jeff Lowder's chapter on the empty tomb (and my chapter "The Plausibility of Theft" for a discussion of recalcitrant belief). See also sections 5.9, 8.1, and 8.5 below, with the added note that negative hallucination (seeing an object as missing that is actually there) is not unheard of either.

4. "At the time of its origins, all of what we now call Christianity was Jewish," David Horrell, "Early Jewish Christianity," *The Early Christian World*, ed. Philip Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), 1.136ff.

5. S.v. "Resurrection," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 4.46.

6. Oscar Cullmann, "The Immortality of Man," in *Immortality and Resurrection*, ed. K. Stendahl (New York: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 19, 42.

7. Anthony Harvey, "They discussed among themselves what this 'rising from the dead' could mean (Mark 9.10)," *Resurrection: Essays in Honour of Leslie Houlden*, ed. Stephen Barton and Graham Stanton (London: SPCK, 1994), p. 71.

8. Edward Lynn Bode, *The First Easter Morning: The Gospel Accounts of the Women's Visit to the Tomb of Jesus* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), pp. 162–63.

9. 1 Sam. 28:7–20.

10. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 6.15.132.2–3, believed to derive from the lost first-century work *The Assumption of Moses*, also possibly quoted in Jude 9 (cf. "Moses, The Assumption of," *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. [1997]: p. 1118).

11. Thoroughly demonstrated by Hermann Strack and Paul Billerbeck, "Allgemeine oder teilweise Auferstehung der Toten?" *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash* 4.2 (C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung: München, 1961), pp. 1166–98 (for Adam as first, cf. also: Adolf Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* 3.13; Chaim Meir Horovitz, *Bet Eked ha-Agadot* 1.58; Solomon Wertheimer, *Leket Midrashim*, pp. 6, 12). After Adam would come Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then those buried in Palestine, then everyone else (some thought martyrs would rise early as well).

12. Acts 2:5–11 shows that people and ideas from every conceivable culture entered Jerusalem in the first century. On Hellenization even within Palestinian Judaism: Morton Smith, "Palestinian Judaism in the First Century," in *Israel: Its Role in Civilization*, ed. Moshe Davis (New York: Harper & Bros., 1956), pp. 67–81, e.g., "Palestine in the first century was profoundly Hellenized" and "Hellenization extended even to the basic structure of much Rabbinic thought" (p. 71).

13. George Nickelsburg Jr., *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 180 (refutation of Cullmann: pp. 177–80). So also: Hans Cavallin, *Life After Death: Paul's Argument for the Resurrection of the*

Dead in I Corinthians 15, Part I: An Enquiry into the Jewish Background (Lund: Gleerup, 1974); also: Arthur Marmorstein, "The Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead in Rabbinic Theology," *Studies in Jewish Theology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 145–61; Alan Segal, "Sects and Parties," *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), pp. 351–96; and Wright (pp. 129–206: "Almost any position one can imagine on the subject appears to have been espoused by some Jews somewhere" in the intertestamental period; on salvation of the soul alone: pp. 140–46).

14. E.g., Mark 2:18, 2:23–28, 3:1–6, 7:1–23, 10:2–12; Matt. 12:1–45, 15:1–14, 19:3–12, 23:1–36; Luke 5:30–33, 6:1–11, 11:37–54, 14:1–6, 16:14–18, 18:9–14; John 5:9–16; etc.

15. "Pharisees," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1971): 13:303–66; "Pharisees," *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (1997): 1271–72; "Pharisees," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2000): 2.657–63, which discusses the further division of the Pharisees into two factions, the **Hillelites** and the **Shammaites** (the former more liberal than the latter), and identifies another sect called the **Haverim**, which might simply mean the Pharisees, but if not this would be yet another sect. See also Wright (pp. 190–200). Ancient sources: Acts 15:5, 23:8; Philippians 3:5; Josephus, *Life* 10, 12, 191, *BJ* 2.162–63, 2.166, *AJ* 13.171–72, 13.293–98, 17.42, 18.11–15; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 80; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.28.3–9.29.1; *Clementine Recognitions* 1.54 and 1.59; Jerome, *Dialogue Against the Luciferians* 23; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 16 (belief in angels and resurrection: 16.2.1; on acceptance of astrology: 16.2.2, w. Goodenough's *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, vols. 1 & 9); Ps.-Tertullian, *Against All Heresies*, frg. 1 (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* 3:1178); *Apostolic Constitutions* 6.6.

16. "Sadducees," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1971): 14:620–22; "Sadducees," *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (1997): 1439; "Sadducees," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2000): 2.812–16, which identifies an additional sect called the **Boethusians**, which might be a faction of the Sadducees; cf. also Wright (pp. 131–40). Ancient sources: Mark 12:18–27; Matthew 22:23–46; Luke 20:27–40; Acts 4:1–2, 23:6–8; Josephus, *Life* 10, *BJ* 2.164–66, *AJ* 13.173, 13.293–98, 18.16–17; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 80; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.29.2–9.30; Jerome, *Dialogue Against the Luciferians* 23; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 14 (who claims they came from Samaria: 14.2.1; on their rejection of resurrection: 14.2.2); *Apostolic Constitutions* 6.6; *Clementine Recognitions* 1.54 and 1.56 (which also says they derived from Samaria, through the Dosithean sect); Ps.-Tertullian, *Against All Heresies*, frg. 1 (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* 3:1178).

17. Mark 7:3–4; *Clementine Recognitions* 1.54 and 1.58; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 15.

18. "Sects, Minor," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1971): 14:1087–88; s.v. "Hemerobaptists," *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (1997): 749; "Hemerobaptists," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2000): 1.352–53. Still unmatched is Joseph Thomas, *Le Mouvement Baptiste en Palestine et Syrie (150 av. J.-C.–300 ap. J.-C.)* (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1935). Ancient sources: Josephus, *Life* 11 and *AJ* 18.116–18 (w. Matt. 3:11, Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3); Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 80; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 17; *Clementine Recognitions* 1.54 and 1.60 (which claims that some Jews even proclaimed John the Baptist as the Christ; *Clementine Homilies* 2.23 claims Simon Magus was once a member of this sect); *Apostolic Constitutions* 6.6.

19. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 18, not to be confused with the Nazoreans, which appears to have been the original name for the Christians (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29; Jerome, *Epistles* 112.13; Acts 24:5).

20. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 19; possibly the same as or the source of an obscure group called the **Helkesaites**, who later inspired a Christian heresy in Origen's day (reported by Origen in a sermon on Psalm 82, as quoted by Eusebius, *History of the Church* 6.38).

21. "Herodians," *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (1997): 762; "Herodians," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2000): 1.355–56. Both doubt the 'Herod as Christ' claim, but give no sound reasons (many sources make the claim besides Epiphanius, and none claim it is a conjecture). Ancient sources: Jerome, *Dialogue Against the Luciferians* 23; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 20 (esp. 20.1.1, 20.1.6–7); Ps.-Tertullian, *Against All Heresies*, frg. 1 (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* 3:1178); Philaster, *Liber de Haeresibus* 28; the sect is mentioned in Mark 3:6, 12:13 (in some variants: 8:15) and Matthew 22:16. It is unclear whether Josephus means the actual sect, as opposed to contemporary political supporters, in *AJ* 14.450 and *BJ* 1.319, 326, 356.

22. "Therapeutae," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1971): 15:1111–12; "Therapeutae," *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (1997): 1608; "Therapeutae," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2000): 2.943–46, which compares and contrasts them in detail with the Essenes, of which they might have been a faction. Ancient sources: Philo, *On the Contemplative Life*; Jerome, *Against Jovinian* 2.14; Eusebius found them so similar to Christians that he mistook them as an early Christian sect in *History of the Church* 2.17.

23. "Sects, Minor," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1971): 14:1087–88, which notes that the Hypsistarians may or may not be identical to four other Jewish sects known by name: the **Mossalians**, the **Euchomenoi**, the **Euphemitai**, and the **Shamayim**. But if not, that's another four sects. The Hypsistarian sect is attested as late as the fourth century CE: cf. "Hypsistarians," *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (1997): 813.

A Nag Hammadi text mentions without naming a Jewish sect that credits an angel with creation, and another that believes in more than one god (*Tripartite Tractate* 12.18–22), which could mean the Maghariya and the Hypsistarians, respectively. Hippolytus says the Essenes (discussed below) were also split into at least six factions (*Refutation of All Heresies* 9.26–9.28.2)—i.e., he says there are four factions (9.26.1), and then yet another (9.28.1), *besides* the usual, and thus six sects in all. One of these sounds a lot like the Bana'im (9.26.3–9.27), whom Hippolytus says believed in a resurrection of the flesh (9.27; unlike, we know from other sources, most Essenes, though he might be misreporting—see n46 below). Another faction he identifies as the **Zealots**, also known (he says) as the Sicarii (9.26.2; Josephus might be describing the Zealots as a sect in *AJ* 18.23–25 and *BJ* 2.117–18; he, too, describes the Essenes as comprised of at least two factions, one of which agrees with Hippolytus 9.28.1–2). Besides this, in 9.18.1–2 Hippolytus says there are "numerous" other sects besides those he discusses.

24. Hegesippus, as quoted by Eusebius, *History of the Church* 4.22.7, who also names as Jewish sects the Essenes, Hemerobaptists, Sadducees, Pharisees, and the Samaritans in general. The Galilaean sect is also named by Justin Martyr in *Dialogue with Trypho* 80, along with six other sects, including three identified nowhere else: the **Genistae**, the **Meristae**, and the so-

called **Hellenists**. The Masbotheans are also named in *Apostolic Constitutions* 6.6, which claims they denied fate, providence, and the immortality of the soul. We know nothing about the others Justin names.

25. "Dead Sea sect," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1971): 5:1408–1409; cf. also "Dead Sea Scrolls," *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (1997): 457; "Philo Judaeus," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2000): 2.663–69, and entries for the other sects. Wright (pp. 185–89), like many scholars, assumes without sufficient argument that the Qumran community represented a normative variety of Essenism. I am skeptical.

26. "Samaritans," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1971): 14:726–58; "Samaria" and "Samaritan Pentateuch," *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (1997): 1449; "Samaritans," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2000): 2.817–18. Ancient sources on Samaritans in general: Josephus, *AJ* 13.74–79, 13.321–26, 13.340–46, 18.85–89; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 9 (denial of resurrection: 9.2.3–4; acceptance of angels and spirits: 14.2.2) and *Clementine Recognitions* 1.54 and 1.57.

27. "Essenes," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1971): 6:899–902; "Essenes," *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (1997): 562; "Essenes," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2000): 1.262–69, which identifies a group called the **Hasideans**, which might mean the Essenes, but if not this makes yet another sect. Ancient sources: Philo, *Hypothetica* 11.1–18, *Every Good Man Is Free* 75–88; Pliny, *Natural History* 5.73 (Dio Chrysostom also discussed them in a now-lost passage referred to by Synesius in *Dio* 3.2, which may derive from Pliny); Josephus, *Life* 10, *BJ* 2.119–61, *AJ* 13.171–72, 15.371–79, 18.18–22 (cf. Wright: pp. 181–85); Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.18.3–9.28.2 (see n23 above); Epiphanius, *Panarion* 10; *Apostolic Constitutions* 6.6.

28. "Samaritans," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1971): 14:739; "Dositheus (2nd cent.)," *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (1997): 502–503. Ancient sources: Origen, *De Principiis* 4.3.2 (alt. div. 4.1.17), *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 13.27; Jerome, *Dialogue Against the Luciferians* 23, *Epistles* 108.13; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 13 (belief in resurrection: 13.1.1); *Clementine Recognitions* 1.54; Ps.-Tertullian, *Against All Heresies*, frg. 1 (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* 3:1178); Simon Magus appears to have come from the Dositheian sect: cf. *Clementine Recognitions* 2.8–11; *Clementine Homilies* 2.22 and 2.24; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.57, 6.11, *De Principiis* 4.3.2; *Apostolic Constitutions* 6.7–8.

29. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 11.

30. Ibid., 12.

31. Two of these Samaritan sects (Dositheans and the "Gorathenes") appear to have originated their own Christian heresies according to the second-century writer Hegesippus, as quoted by Eusebius, *History of the Church* 4.22.5–6. See nn18, 28 on Simon Magus and his association with the Hemerobaptists, Dositheans, and early Christian heresy.

32. Cf. Nickelsburg, op. cit., pp. 102–104, 175, 179.

33. For all these points: Nickelsburg, op. cit. (esp. pp. 122–23, 174); "Resurrection," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2000): 2.764–67; "Resurrection," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1971): 14:96–103 (cf. also "Soul, Immortality of," 14.174–81; "Body and Soul," 4.1165–66; and "Afterlife," 2.336–39). See also T. H. Gaster's contribution to "Resurrection" in the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962),

4:39–42; and the entry "Resurrection of the Dead" in the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (1997): 1388. On ideas of spiritual consciousness between death and resurrection, see Saul Lieberman, "Some Aspects of After Life in Early Rabbinic Literature," *Origins of Judaism* 1.2 (*Normative Judaism*, ed. Jacob Neusner [New York: Garland Publishing, 1990]; orig. in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume: On the Occasion of his Seventy-Fifth Birthday* [Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1965], pp. 495–532).

34. Philo, *On the Migration of Abraham* 2–3, a treatise that interprets Genesis as an allegory for the spiritual journey each man must undergo to be saved. Philo does on occasion refer to his theory of salvation as "resurrection" (*palingenesia*, cf. section 5.10, w. n252), though not in the passages we examine. See F. Burnett, "Philo on Immortality: A Thematic Study of Philo's Concept of *paliggenesia*," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46 (1984): 447–70. The clearest example is Philo, *De Cherubim* 114–15, where he says that when we die "we who are akin to those with bodies will not exist, but we who are akin to those without bodies will hasten to resurrection" (*all' ouk esometha hoi meta sômatôn sugkritoi poioi, all' eis paliggenesian hormêsomen hoi meta asômatôn sugkritoi poioi*).

35. Ibid., 9. Philo interprets the Exodus flight from Egypt as an allegory for the soul's escape from the body, into the heavenly paradise that is the true promised land (e.g., 14). It is thus telling that Christ dies and rises over a Passover weekend, a holiday centered on this very Exodus narrative.

36. Ibid., pp. 16–17; cf. 23, 192–94.

37. Ibid., p. 21; cf. *De Agricultura* 25 and *Legum Allegoriae* 3.69ff. This was a belief also shared by Stoics, cf. e.g., Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 9.24, 10.33, 12.33.

38. *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 4.75. This (and the matching text on Exodus) survives mainly in Armenian translation. English is from the standard Loeb Classics edition. Note how Philo's position resembles Paul's: though they are mere temporary appendages, we must still master our bodies (e.g., 1 Cor. 6).

39. *Who Is the Heir of Things Divine?* p. 283.

40. *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 3.10.

41. Ibid., 3.11. Philo goes on to say in the same section that the virtuous man lives two lives, "one with the body, and one without the body."

42. Ibid., 4.74.

43. *Questions and Answers on Exodus* 2.13.

44. *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 1.92.

45. Even in 2 Baruch 51:10, despite that work defending a traditional resurrection of the flesh (which is *later* followed by a "transformation" into angelic form).

46. Josephus, *BJ* 2.154–55; cf. Wright (pp. 175–81). Josephus ascribes (in even greater detail) essentially the same view to the Zealots (*BJ* 7.343–48), supporting the earlier suggestion that they were a breakaway faction of the Essenes (see n23 above). I disagree with Wright (pp. 183–85) that *BJ* 2.153 and *AJ* 18.18 "hint" at an Essene belief in bodily resurrection, for reference to the 'body' is conspicuously absent from those passages. However, I do agree there may have been at least one faction of Essenes who held such a view, as Hippolytus explicitly states (*Refutation of All Heresies* 9.27.1). It is often overlooked that this statement

occurs in the *middle* of a discussion of five breakaway factions of Essenes (1st: 9.26.1–2, 2nd: 9.26.2, 3rd: 9.26.2–3, 4th: 9.26.3–4–9.27, and 5th: 9.28.1–2), and in fact refers only to the fourth faction, not all Essenes, which suggests this resurrection belief was unusual among Essenes generally, though Hippolytus may have misunderstood what was really a two-body doctrine, and thus improperly substituted *sarx* for *sôma* when paraphrasing his source.

47. Josephus, *BJ* 2.163, cf. *AJ* 18.14. That he was a Pharisee: *Life* 12. For a brief but crucial analysis of afterlife views in the works of Josephus, see Joseph Sievers, "Josephus and the Afterlife," in *Understanding Josephus: Seven Perspectives*, ed. Steve Mason (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 20–34.

48. Josephus, *BJ* 3.372, 374–75. In contrast, "the souls" of bad people (suicides in particular) "are received by the darkest place in Hades," i.e., without new bodies.

49. Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.218 (italics added): *genesthai te palin*, lit. "come into existence again"; *bios*, lit. "mode of life," akin to quality of life, manner of living.

50. b. Talmud, *Shabbath* 152b. This section also has a lot of material on the status of the disembodied soul. According to *Chagigah* 12b, human souls are actually *eternal*, existing even before their bodies are born on earth.

51. In this section we shall only discuss the Rabbinica, which represent the heirs of one or more strands of the Pharisaic tradition (in the Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, etc.). These texts are not to be confused with the copious intertestamental and apocryphal literature, which present wildly diverse views on the nature of resurrection.

52. See Wright (pp. 195–200). Other questions arose *within* the community of believers, such as how Jews of the Diaspora would be raised in Jerusalem (their bones would roll through secret underground caverns for reassembly in the holy land, cf. Wright: p. 194), or whether God would reassemble our bodies flesh-first or bones-first (Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 14.5 and Leviticus 14.9).

53. For examples, see: b. Talmud, *Berachoth* 15b, *Pesachim* 68a, *Sanhedrin* 90b, 92a, *Chullin* 142a; Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 56.1, 78.1, Lamentations 1.45.

54. b. Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 90b, w. 91a–b.

55. b. Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 90b.

56. Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 100:2.

57. b. Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 91b. A similar paradox within Deut. 32.39 is also resolved the same way in the same section.

58. Midrash Rabbah, Ecclesiastes 1.6.

59. Ibid., 1.7. Cf. Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris* 63, 77–79 (*Moralia* 376d, 382e–83a): "that part of the world which undergoes reproduction and destruction is contained underneath the orb of the moon" whereas above that sphere, the heavens are "far removed from the earth, uncontaminated and unpolluted and pure from all matter that is subject to destruction and death." This was a widespread belief in antiquity.

60. b. Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 92b, i.e., we have to be able to fly above the mess. Both this idea and the next derive from Isa. 40:31.

61. Cf. Ezek. 37:1–14, the clearest and most detailed description of resurrection of the flesh anywhere in the Old Testament (cf. n67).

62. This is clear in other passages, too, e.g., Midrash Rabbah, The Song of Songs 2.18; see also b. Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 90b, where it is again implied that the resurrections performed by Ezekiel are the same as in the general resurrection.

63. Pharisee: Philippians 3:5; Diaspora: Acts 22:3 (cf. Gal. 1:22); Education: Phil. 3:5, Acts 22:4 (cf. Gal. 1:13–14).

64. So, e.g., 1 Cor. 9:20–21, Gal. 5:2–6. Acts 15:1–29 identifies ex-Pharisees among the earliest Christians demanding adherence to Jewish law, including circumcision. In Gal. 2:1–10 Paul considers these Pharisaic converts to be traitors and *agents provocateurs*—so far had he drifted from his original beliefs.

65. In contrast, for example, to Epiphanius, who presents copious prooftexts against denials of the resurrection (*Panarion* 9.3.1–5).

66. Psalm 8:6, Isaiah 25:8, and Hosea 13:14 (in 1 Cor. 15:27, 54, and 55 respectively).

67. The most obvious: Dan. 12:2 ("And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake . . . to everlasting life"), Isa. 26:19 ("Your dead will live, their corpses will rise, you who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy . . . the earth will give birth to the departed spirits") and Ezek. 37:1–14 ("I will put sinews on" your bones, "cover you with skin, and put breath in you that you may come alive," etc.). And many others were similarly interpreted, e.g., Deut. 22:39 ("[What] I kill, I make alive") and 31:16 ("And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Behold thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, and rise up *again*,'" hence with the same body he slept in); Isa. 60:21 ("At the end they shall inherit *the land*" indicating an earthly resurrection); Job 19:26 (". . . in my flesh will I see God"), or 10:10–11 ("you clothe me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews"), etc. See Wright (pp. 147–53, 195–200).

68. It cannot be argued that Paul did not accept such forms of argument, since he is comfortable using analogies (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:37–42) and clearly believes scripture relevant to establishing basic beliefs (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:3–4), and often cites scripture as evidence (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:19, 2:9, 2:16, 3:19–20, 14:21–22, etc.), so surely, if pertinent passages relevant to establishing the nature of the resurrection body were available, he would have used them.

69. 1 Cor. 15:13–19, 29–32.

70. Ibid., 15:35.

71. Ibid., 15:37, 39–40, 42, 47–48, 50–52.

72. Ibid., 15:39–41, 47–54.

73. Ibid., 15:37–38. The idea that seeds had to "die" in order to produce is found in John 12:24 (Jesus speaking). See section 5.7 below.

74. Phil. 3:8, w. 3:4–7 and 9.

75. Quote: Phil. 3:3; Pharisees: Phil. 3:4–6, w. 3:2; Circumcision: Phil. 3:3 versus 3:2 (cf. Col. 2:11). See nn289 and 290 below.

76. Phil. 3:19–21: *epigeia*, lit. "things on earth"; *politeuma*, lit. "polity," a place where citizenship is held; *metaschêmatizô*, lit. "change the form"; *tapeinôsis*, lit. "condition of being in a low place"; *symmorphon*, lit. "share the same form with" (cf. Rom. 8:29).

77. The same idea appears in Philo, who calls the Therapeutae "citizens of heaven and the cosmos" (*ouranou men kai kosmou politôn*, in *On the Contemplative Life* 90), because they live

"within the soul alone." Elsewhere he says in general that the true "home and country" of the saved is "the most pure substance of heaven" (*Questions and Answers on Genesis* 4.74), hence we are mere travelers when on earth.

78. And *metaschêmatizô* can mean precisely that: to change one's clothes (e.g., Josephus, *AJ* 7.257, 8.256–57). The prevalence of the clothing metaphor in Paul's conception of the resurrection will soon become apparent, so we can interpret this passage accordingly.

79. The following analysis draws on, but often disagrees with, five major commentaries, to which I will refer by author's last name hereafter: Raymond Collins, *First Corinthians* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1999), whose bibliographies are particularly useful (pp. 528, 539–40, 546, 555–56, 561–62, 568, 572–73, 584); Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1987); John Hurd Jr., *The Origin of I Corinthians* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983); Hans Conzelmann (tr. by James Leitch), *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); Jean Héring, *The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (London: Epworth, 1962). I shall also refer to Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995). But I will not bother referring to chapter 4 of William Lane Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellon, 1989), pp. 117–59. Many of Craig's general points there are correct, and his citations of relevant scholarship useful, but his treatment overall is comparatively shallow, and, by failing to anticipate it, does not impact my analysis at all—all his salient arguments on Pauline doctrine are already mooted or undermined by the case I make in the present chapter.

80. 1 Cor. 15:12 (cf. 15:29, 32). The larger context is a letter the Corinthians wrote to Paul (7:1), describing a number of divisive issues that the community was quarrelling over (e.g., 8:1, 12:1, 16:1), of which this is one—apparently raised in the context of arguing over the use of prophecy during church meetings (14:39–40, w. 12:1, 14:1; more broadly, the issue concerned whom to permit to speak up in church and when: 14:26–35). The original letter from Corinth does not survive, nor does a previous letter Paul had written them (5:9). The preceding half of 1 Corinthians also responded to rumors of other divisive issues arising in Corinth, which Paul heard from a third party, not from the Corinthians themselves (1:11, 5:1).

81. 1 Cor. 15:35.

82. Ibid., 15:58, w. 15:33–34.

83. Ibid., 15:1–2, 11–19, 29–32, 58.

84. Ibid., 15:17, and 15:12–16, 20–23, and 15:24–28, respectively.

85. Ibid., 15:35, w. 15:13, 15–16, 20, 23. This is also entailed by Phil. 3:21. See also Rom. 6:5 and 1 John 3:2; and Wright (p. 215).

86. Gal. 1:12, 15–16, and 1:18–20, and 2:1–2, 9–10ff., respectively.

87. 1 Cor. 15:3, 4 and 15:5, 6, 7, 8, respectively. That Paul says Jesus was "buried" does not *entail* his grave became empty, only that his passage into the land of the dead was completed. The phrase "died and was buried," using exactly the same words in exactly the same form (*apethanen* and *etaphê*), is a regular Septuagint expression, and Paul does say he is drawing on scripture. So: Rachel (mother of the twelve tribes, buried in Bethlehem): Gen.

35:19; Aaron (first high priest of Israel): Deut. 10:6; Gideon: Judges 8:32 (cf. also 10:2, 10:5, 12:7, 12:10, 12:12, 12:15; and 2 Sam. 17:23).

88. Luke 24:39; John 20:20, 25, 27; and Luke 24:41–43, John 21:13; and Luke 24:39, respectively.

89. 1 Cor. 15:12–19.

90. Otherwise, Paul's appeal to that fact in his argument would have been futile: 1 Cor. 15:13, 16, 19. So Héring (pp. 162–63).

91. 1 Cor. 15:36–38. Throughout this discourse Paul draws on the Genesis narrative (Raymond Collins, pp. 563–64; Wright, pp. 313, 341), e.g., there as here, "on the third day" God gives each seed its own body (Gen. 1:11–12). The link with the "new creation" doctrine of earliest Christianity (see section 6.1.1 below) is hardly accidental: on the "first" day God creates light (1:3–5: hence the resurrection narrative in Mark begins at dawn); on the "second" day God separates heaven and earth, and the gulf that separates them (1:6–8: defining Paul's distinction between the two). See n118 below.

92. The definitive study of which is Caroline Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), cited hereafter as "Bynum" and page number.

93. Justin Martyr, *On the Resurrection* 10 (cf. Irenaeus, *Against All Heresies* 5.2; 2 Clement 9:1–6, 14:3–5).

94. Justin Martyr, *On the Resurrection* 2, 4 (cf. also *Apologia* 1.18–21, 66; *Trypho* 80–81, 107); Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 57–59.

95. Claymolding, metallurgy, and mosaic restoration: Justin, ibid., p. 6. Claymolding: Athenagoras, *Treatise on the Resurrection* 9. Regrowth of tree foliage in Spring, the legend of the Phoenix (from a pun in Psalms 92), and repairing a ship with new parts: Tertullian, ibid., 12, 13, 60 (cf. 18 for emphasis on importance of analogies in general; biblical analogies of preservation in 42–43, 53, 58). So also Theophilus, *Ad Autolycum* 2.26 (claymolding for removing blemishes), cf. 1.8, 1.13, 2.14–15. Biblical analogies of preservation are used by Irenaeus, *Against All Heresies* 5.5, 5.9–12; numerous nature metaphors stressing continuity are deployed by Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 34–35.

96. Justin, ibid., 8; Athenagoras, ibid., 15, 18, 20–23, 25; Tertullian, ibid., 14–18, 40, 56, 63.

97. Athenagoras, ibid., 25.

98. So contrast 2 Baruch 49–51, where exactly the same question quoted by Paul is answered, in about as many words, yet in exactly the opposite way.

99. Athenagoras, ibid., 2–8; Tertullian, ibid., 18. So also Theophilus, *Ad Autolycum* 2.38, Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 5, 11, 14–40; cf. *Apocalypse of Peter* 4.

100. Athenagoras, ibid., 8.

101. Tertullian, ibid., 55, 60–61. So also Justin, ibid., 3. Contrast w. 1 Cor. 6:13.

102. Athenagoras, ibid., 16 (cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 71e–72a).

103. On both sides of the debate, requiring a battle of quotes and exegesis: Justin, ibid., 2; Tertullian, ibid., 34–37, 62; cf. Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3:1–3; *Epistula Apostolorum* 11, 24–25.

104. Cf. Justin, ibid., 2, 8–9; Lazarus held to be essentially the same as Jesus: Justin,

ibid., 8–9, and Tertullian, ibid., 38, 53, so also resurrections performed by Ezekiel (29–30; and cf. 31–33), and resurrections performed by Paul in Acts (39, one example Paul must surely have been able to cite—either as a proof or a contrast—had it really happened). The stories of Lazarus, Ezekiel, Jonah, and the three men in the furnace (all cited either by Tertullian, or Irenaeus, *Against All Heresies* 5.5.2, 5.13.1, etc.), were common themes in Christian funerary art (from at least the third century)—this entails belief in their similarity, and value as proofs: Robin Jensen, "Born Again: The Resurrection of the Body and the Restoration of Eden," *Understanding Early Christian Art* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 156–82, 209–13.

105. Justin, ibid., 2, 7–8; Athenagoras, ibid., 10–14, 24; Tertullian, ibid., 1–10, 18–19.

106. Justin, ibid., 8; Tertullian, ibid., 18, and 19–28 (extensive OT exegesis proving the point), and 40–54 (against Gnostic interpretations of Paul).

107. Like those attacked in 2 Timothy 2:16–18.

108. Like those attacked in Justin, *Trypho* 80.4.

109. So: Dale Martin (pp. 104–36); Hurd (pp. 195–200); Hêring (pp. 162–63); Raymond Collins (p. 541); and most forcefully: Conzelmann (pp. 261–62).

110. Cf. Dale Martin (pp. 107–109); Conzelmann (p. 261, esp. nn113–14).

111. 1 Cor. 15:6, 18, 20, 29, 51–52.

112. Ibid., 15:18–19, 29–32.

113. Note the Corinthian doubters were *not* the same ones baptizing for the dead: Paul deliberately switches from the second to the third person when bringing up the latter (1 Cor. 15:29, versus 17, 34, 36), so he is saying "since *you* deny the resurrection, what will *they* do who baptize for the dead?" That Paul is pitting one faction of the Corinthians against another (see section 6.2. below) is quite clear from the fact that his very line of argument ends with an admonition to the Corinthians *not to listen* to the faction that denies the resurrection. For this Fee makes a solid case (pp. 773–74, w. 763n15).

114. This fact is explicit in Wisdom of Solomon 2, making the very same argument as Paul, in both content and audience. This was a standard mode of attack against Epicureans, who famously argued for the finality of death (Dale Martin: 275–76n79).

115. 3 Cor. 5, 24–35 (cf. *Acts of Paul* 14, 39).

116. 1 Clement 25.

117. If 1 Clement 26:3 was written by Clement and meant literally (quoting Job 19:26).

118. 1 Cor. 15:39–42. The words used throughout are *sarx* (flesh, meat), *sôma* (body), *doxa* (glory, splendor, magnificence), *epigeia* (on earth), *epourania* (in heaven). This continues the Genesis parallel (see also n140 below): on the fourth day, God creates stars, moon, and sun in heaven (Gen. 1:14–19); on the fifth day, fish and birds (1:20–23); on the sixth, cattle and men (1:24–31: other land animals, too, but only cattle are singled out by name). Notice how these variations in flesh correspond with variations in *location*: sea, land, air, and heaven. Man is special for being made in God's image, thus having something of both heaven and earth in him (1:27, 2:7). Hence Paul can refer to our present bodies as *ta melê ta epi tês gês*, "the body parts we have on the earth" (Col. 3:5), but our 'lives' as invisibly residing with God (Col. 3:3).

119. So also Galen *De Constitutione Artis Medicae* 9 (Kühn 1.255).

120. Cf. 2 Cor. 12:2. It was commonplace, even within conservative Judaism, to imagine the heavens as divided into seven levels, per b. Talmud, *Chagigah* 12b (see nn147, 246, 247).

121. Ibid., 15:43–44a: *atimia*, lit. "absence of honor" (equivalent to shame or humiliation); *astheneia*, lit. "absence of strength"; *dynamis*, lit. "power, capability." Contrary to some translations, the pronoun "it" does not exist in this passage; "body" is the subject of each verb (not the predicate), and the two verbs do not share the same subject (the word *body* is repeated, without any adjective like "this" or "the same" linking the two).

122. Phil. 2:30; Rom. 11:3, 16:4; 1 Pet. 3:20; 1 John 3:16; hence 1 Cor. 15:45. In other authors it can mean what receives salvation: Heb. 10:39, James 1:21, 5:20, 1 Pet. 1:9.

123. Rom. 7:14, 15:26–27; 1 Cor. 10:3–4; Eph. 6:12. Also, "spiritual gifts" (Rom. 1:11; 1 Cor. 12:1, 14:1) are surely meant to stand in contrast with *physical* gifts like beauty, strength, or talent, just as "spiritual" seed contrasts with the "fleshly" produce of 1 Cor. 9:11 (meaning money and supplies: 9:1, 6–7, 14, 17–18). So also in Rom. 8:5 things "of the flesh" are contrasted with things "of the spirit."

124. Rom. 7:14, 1 Cor. 3:1: *sarkinos*; Rom.15:27, 1 Cor. 9:11: *sarkikos*. Paul also implies a parallel between *psychikon* and *choïkos*, "made of dirt" (1 Cor. 15:44, 47–49).

125. Against those who say Paul wasn't talking about "stuff," see Dale Martin (276n81) and Conzelmann (pp. 282–84), who both explain that Paul does mean a body defined by *psychê* (biological life) versus one defined by *pneuma* (spirit), but this entails a corresponding *substance* (from which one derives the corresponding principle). Paul already says things in heaven and of heaven are made of different stuff than things on earth. Note, too, that the word *pneumatinos* did not exist in Greek—over a thousand years of literature and the word was never coined. When substance was intended, the Greeks always used *pneumatikos*. Likewise, the word *psychinos* did not exist either—see "*psycheinos*," in Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (1940).

126. 1 Thess. 5:23. Heb. 4:12 says God can "penetrate all the way to the difference between *psychê* and *pneuma*, as between joints and marrow," while 1 Cor. 7:34 says a woman is comprised of both *sôma* and *pneuma*, it being understood that her *sôma* also has *psychê*, and hence is *psychikon*, i.e., biologically "alive."

127. Marcus Aurelius Meditations 12.3, 12.14.

128. Clement of Alexandria *Prophetic Eclogues* 55.1. See also Dale Martin (pp. 117–20).

129. 1 Cor. 2:14–15. The word "spiritually" is the adverb *pneumatikôs*.

130. James 3:13–14, 16.

131. Ibid., 3:15: *anôthen*, lit. "from up above"; *katerchomai*, lit. "come down"; *epigeios*, lit. "on earth"; *psychikê*, lit. "attached to *psychê* or life"; *daimoniôdês*, lit. "in the category of divine spirits," from *daimones*, "demons," usually in a hostile sense in the New Testament.

132. Jude 4, 10: *physikôs*, lit. "naturally, by nature or instinct"; *aloga*, lit. "without logic or reason"; *zôa*, lit. "living things"; *phtheirô*, lit. "destroy, rot, go to ruin."

133. Cf. Jude 5, 11.

134. Ibid., 19.

135. Ibid., 21, 23.

136. Photius, *Lexicon* 656.19–20: *androthumos*, lit. "human soul," from *andro-* and *thumos*.

137. That is the evident point of Galatians 6:7–8, for example.

138. 1 Cor. 15:44, 46. Paul probably assumes the context is that of the saved (as perhaps also in 15:51, though the existence of a sea of variants for that passage indicates later Christians weren't sure). The damned might not get new bodies, from the way Paul discusses their fate elsewhere, which could agree with either Philo or Josephus. So Héring (pp. 163–68); Fee (pp. 749–50); Conzelmann (pp. 249–50, 264–65, 269–70; cf. 271n72, 290). The alternative would require the bodily *pneuma* to undergo torture or some other kind of painful judgment in hell, which seems not to fit Paul's exaltation of *pneuma* generally, or his participatory soteriology (see section 5.7 below). But I have no definite position on this.

139. For a good discussion of a curious parallel doctrine of "two Adams," one heavenly and one earthly (which may be a development, in a different direction, of a common tradition inherited by Paul), see Conzelmann (pp. 284–86). Paul's "primal celestial Adam" descended, died, and reascended, in order to drag the saved along with him in his wake (Rom. 5:10–21). But apart from that, Paul's doctrine is extraordinarily similar to the other, which appears as early as Philo.

140. 1 Cor. 15:45, 47–49 (quoting and expanding on Gen. 2:7, and thus completing his midrash of the Genesis narrative): *gignomai* w. *eis*, lit. "turn into, become"; *zô*, lit. "live, be alive"; *zôopoieô*, lit. "make alive, give life to"; *gês*, lit. "earth, land"; *choïkos*, lit. "made of dirt or clay," from the *chous*, clay, from which Adam is formed in the Genesis passage Paul just quoted; *ouranos*, lit. "heaven"; *epouranios*, lit. "in heaven"; *eikôn*, lit. "icon," hence statue, the image of a body, so "pattern" (cf. Rom. 8:29). I render *psychê* as "creature" for that is the closest sense available in English for an embodied vitality (see section 5.7; "*psychê*," Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (1940), end of definition 4).

141. Though aorist, this use of the subjunctive (as usual) tends to retain a future meaning (H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* §§1797–99). It is remotely possible Paul intended this to be a future general condition in an uncommon aspect (ibid., §§1796(3), 1810–1811, cf. 1860, 2287), which in English resembles the ordinary future ("we shall wear"), while retaining the aorist aspect (and all that entails). But the particle *an* would be expected. Raymond Collins (p. 572) defends and explains the hortatory reading, as does Fee (pp. 787, 794–95).

142. 2 Cor. 3:18; contrast Phil. 3:21; and compare Rom. 12:2. See Wright (pp. 220–22, 238, 251–52, 464).

143. Col. 3:1–3.

144. Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* 12.24–25, 12.30.

145. Gen. 2:7.

146. 1 Cor. 15:21–22. Cf. Rom. 5:12–19.

147. 1 Thess. 4:17. The verb *harpazô* here connotes a violent and rapid grabbing (it can be rendered "sucked up"). The noun *aêr* means literally "air, sky" but often denotes a middle region between the earthly world and the ethereal world, where good and evil spirits battle

each other. I see no plausible reason to read this passage as purely "metaphorical," as Wright tries to have it (pp. 215–16; so also pp. 458–60). Nor do I see any good reason not to take Heb. 11:15–16, 12:22–23, or Col. 1:5, 1 Pet. 1:4, Matt. 5:12, Luke 6:23, as just what they say, especially since many Jews believed the heavenly Jerusalem was in the third heaven (b. Talmud, *Chagigah* 12b), to which even Paul refers (2 Cor. 12:2, also the location of Paradise: 2 Cor. 12:3; see nn120, 246, 247), and 1 Cor. 15:40–42, 47–49 strongly imply heavenly location (see n118). Of course, this may be moot: if earth will be destroyed (see n160), we will live in heaven by default, making a distinction between the present heavens and the new imperishable world merely semantic.

148. 1 Cor. 15:50: *sarx* and *haima*, lit. "flesh" and "blood"; *klêronomeô*, lit. "receive as a possession" (the connotation "inherit" usually comes with the genitive, not the accusative as here, but the essential meaning is the same, and "inherit" suggests the Promised Land of Exodus, per Wright: p. 465); *phthora* and *aphtharsia*, lit. "decay, ruin" and "absence of decay and ruin" (i.e., "indestructibility"), both abstract nouns just as I have translated them, not adjectives.

149. Luke 24:39.

150. John 20:27.

151. 1 Cor. 6:13: "Food is for the stomach, and the stomach for food, but God will do away with both." Yet Jesus eats fish in Luke 24:41–43 (cf. Acts 10:41; Luke also inserts "eating" into his general vision of resurrection in Luke 22:30, a fact omitted by Matt. 19:28). More in accord with Paul, the Talmud preserves the view of some Jews that there would be no eating, drinking, or sex after the resurrection (b. Talmud, *Berachot* 18a), which was *not* the standard Rabbinical view (b. Talmud, *Baba Bathra* 74a–75a).

152. For example, observe how Luke twists the Septuagint text of Psalms 16:10 (quoted in Acts 2:27) to support the *flesh* of Jesus rising from the grave: the actual verse says nothing about flesh, and is about the holy one's *soul* (*psychê*), yet in Acts 2:31 Luke drops the reference to his soul and inserts in its place a reference to his *flesh* (*sarx*), thus distorting his source to support his agenda. It is also notable that Psalms 16:10 says the holy one will not enter the realm of the dead *at all*, and the word often translated as "decay" or "corruption" is not the word that actually means those things (*phthora*) but *diaphthora*, which means thorough *destruction* (Ps. 140:11, Jer. 15:3, Ezek. 21:31). Hence Psalms 16:10 plainly speaks of the holy one *not dying* (and not ceasing to exist). It is not about the holy one dying and then rising. Such is the nature of Lukan polemic. Yet even that wasn't enough for later scribes, who tried to doctor verse 2:30 as well (for which as many as nine textual variants exist), into an even more blatant declaration of resurrection of the flesh.

153. Of course, a Christian today might claim that it is Paul who is the heretic, and the later Gospels contain the truth, but such an admission would hardly be defensible (among other things, Paul's claim to firsthand contact with the eyewitnesses is far more credible; cf. also Wright: p. 318). This would also radically alter the Christian religion, as a large part of every New Testament would have to be torn out and thrown away.

154. 1 Cor. 15:51–54 (quoting Isa. 25:8): *atomon*, lit. "an indivisible unit," thus the smallest unit of time; *egerthêsontai*, lit. "they will be raised up," most commonly an idiom for

"woken up"; *aphthartos* (adj.) and *aphtharsia* (n.), lit. "without decay, indestructible," and "indestructibility"; *phthartos*, "subject to decay, ruin, perishing"; *endysasthai* (aorist middle), lit. "go into, get into," often of clothes, armor, sandals, etc.; *thnêtos*, lit. "subject to death, mortal"; *athanasia*, lit. "immortality."

155. In 1 Thess. 4:16–17 Paul says the dead will be raised first, *then* the living. Though either account could be accommodated to the other, as expanding upon or abbreviating it, I can't tell which is the most accurate picture Paul had in mind. See Raymond Collins (pp. 574–75), who identifies intertextual links between the Corinthians and Thessalonians passages, and analyzes their differences.

156. Like what Paul used in Philippians: *metaschêmatizô*, "change the form of."

157. Some examples in the Septuagint: Ex. 13:13 (trading animals); Lev. 27:10 (trading something good for something bad), also 27:27 and 27:33; 1 Kings 20:25 (trading a lost army for a new one, hence "renew" in a purely figurative sense) so also: Isa. 40:31 and 41:1 ("renewing" one's strength); Jer. 2:11 (trading one glory for another), likewise in Ps. 106:20.

158. Some examples in the Septuagint: Gen. 35:2 (exchanging one set of clothes for another), Ezra 6:11 and 12 (exchanging certain words for others), Jer. 2:11 (exchanging one's gods for others), Jer. 13:23 (exchanging one appearance for another); and in the New Testament: Acts 6:14 (exchanging one set of customs for another) and Gal. 4:20 (exchanging one mood for another). The Septuagint also uses *allagêsontai* three other times, all in Daniel (4:16, 25, 32), but in a different idiom meaning "alternate, pass in turn," hence "seven seasons will pass by in front of you." The idea is of trading one season in for another, thus "changing seasons."

159. Heb. 1:10–12 (from Psalms 102:25–27).

160. So there can be no doubt that the earliest Christians believed the present world would be annihilated and replaced with a new one, just as is graphically described in 2 Pet. 3:3–13, and clearly assumed in 1 John 2:15–17 and Heb. 12:26–29, 13:14. Paul must have shared this belief (why would he differ so radically from his peers?), as he appears to have done: 1 Cor. 1:28, 6:13, 7:31; 2 Cor. 4:18 (cf. Rom. 9:21–22; 1 Cor. 11:32; 1 Thess. 5:2–3; 1 Tim. 6:9; and Rom. 9:29 in light of 2 Pet. 2:6 and Jude 7; Gal. 4:3, 9 and Col. 2:8, 20 in light of 2 Pet. 3:10, 12); also, the logic of 1 Cor. 15:28 and 39–44, 50, 53–54, is that all flesh (including plants and animals) will not inherit the new kingdom, that all mortal creation shall be replaced with an immortal one (we are sown in this world, raised in a different one), for only then can God be "all in all" as promised.

161. Ps. 102:25–28, Heb. 1:10–14.

162. Rom. 1:23, again contrasting *aphthartos* and *phthartos*.

163. The Nag Hammadi *Treatise on Resurrection* (or *Letter to Rheginos*) 47.30–48.6 (cf. 45.36–46.2).

164. Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* 8.58, 11.19, 12.1.

165. Though still then, as now, a part of God, for God shall be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). Wright's suggestion that God keeps a vast warehouse of new "bodies" waiting for us in heaven, like some freakish android farm (pp. 368, 371, scary echoes of Heaven's Gate here), is neither necessary (scripturally or metaphysically), nor consistent with Paul's picture of things in 1 Thess. 4:15–17, where there is no mention of our bodies coming down to "get us."

166. Gospel of Phillip 57:23. Though occurring in a late Gnostic text, this particular idea is probably a correct reading of Paul, given his use of *gymnos* in 1 Cor. 15:37 and 2 Cor. 5:3–4 (see n172 below). On the popular idea of the body as a garment, cf. Dale Martin: p. 109.

167. *Ascension of Isaiah* 9.9–18 (prob. first century).

168. Lucian, *Hermotimus* 7. Exactly the view of Plutarch: "only" the "pure, fleshless, and undefiled" spirit can attain heaven (*Romulus* 28.6), an idea loosely echoed in Gal. 6:7–9.

169. Thoroughly demonstrated by Dale Martin (pp. 3–37, w. 115–17, 127–28); so also Héring (pp. 176–77). Marcus Aurelius is typical: the imperishable soul is made of air and fire; but the perishable body, of earth and water (*Meditations* 11.20). So to call a soul "bodiless" or "incorporeal" usually did *not* mean immaterial or nonphysical, unlike today. To the contrary, souls could have substance, volume, location, even physical powers.

170. This is thoroughly demonstrated in Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Mortals and Immortals: The Body of the Divine," *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 27–49.

171. Which may be what Paul has in mind (see n160 above).

172. 1 Cor. 15:37 versus 2 Cor. 5:3–4: in both cases the identical word is used, *gymnos*, which carried strong connotations of the Hellenistic obsession with perfection of the flesh, in the public *gymnasia*, where also philosophers commonly lectured—thus, both flesh and worldly wisdom are bound up in the same idea at once. This bridges Paul's metaphors: the seed that is sown is the body of flesh, so to be of flesh is to be naked, just like (again) Adam (Gen. 2:25). Only the ensuing sprout is *truly* clothed—but it is not a "clothed seed," for the seed is gone, so his metaphor does not sustain the interpretation that we keep our flesh and merely put on something else over it.

173. 1 Cor. 15:49.

174. In a parallel analogy, Paul says we exchange residences in 2 Cor. 5 (see next section).

175. So, as Héring says, "this mortal thing" must mean "our present mortal corruptible existence" (p. 181), not simply the body—otherwise it would have been much easier to use *sôma* instead of *touto*, and there must be a reason Paul chose not to. The use of the pronoun "this" also implies a material distinction between the two (this versus that).

176. 2 Cor. 4:13–14.

177. Ibid., 4:16, then 4:18. The key vocabulary: *diaphtheiretai*, lit. "is going to total destruction," hence "is decomposing," passive of *diaphtheirô*, "to destroy utterly"; *proskaira*, lit. "lasting only a short time," like the Gospel seed that passes away in Matt. 13:21; opp. *aiônia*, lit. "everlasting, enduring for all time."

178. Ibid., 4:3–4.

179. So Rom. 7:22–24, where the inner man is distinguished from, and longs to be "released" from, the outer man of flesh (so Rom. 8:23; cf. Gal. 5:16–25); and Eph. 3:16, where it is the *inner* man on whom Christ's spirit operates; and Col. 3:5, 9–11, where it is the "new man" who is renewed and conforms to the image of Christ in the end, and the "old man" that is left behind as dead (so also Eph. 4:22–24 and Rom. 6:6–11).

180. Ibid., 5:1–4: *epigeios*, lit. "a thing on earth"; *oikia*, lit. "house"; *skênos*, lit. "body as

a tent" (see section 5.7 below); *kataluô*, lit. "brake up completely, reduce to rubble"; *oikodomê*, lit. "a residential building"; *oikêtêrion*, lit. "a dwelling-place"; *baroumenoi*, lit. "people being weighed down with a heavy burden"; *eph' hô*, lit. "for which," a standard idiom meaning "for which reason"; *ekdysasthai* and *ependysasthai*, both words used twice (the chiasmic doublet strongly implies that the variant of *endys-* for the first *ekdys-* must be incorrect, though evidently a very early corruption), lit. "get something out of something else" and "put something on over something else," respectively, usually in reference to putting on and getting out of one's clothes; *to thnêton*, lit. "the thing that is mortal"; *katapinô* (same as 1 Cor. 15:54; here in the passive subjunctive, *katapothê*), lit. "drink up," to the last drop, so "consume completely."

181. Ibid., 5:6–8: *endêmeô* and *ekdêmeô*, both words used twice, lit. "to be inside one's house" and "to be outside one's house," respectively, hence dwelling in our earthly house, versus dwelling in God's house (or the house God will make for us). A parallel with the previous words of clothing is certainly intended here, both describing the same thing (our future resurrection).

182. Ibid., 5:16.

183. Ibid., 5:17.

184. As was clearly the worry behind 1 Thess. 4:13–18, and probably also 1 Cor. 15 (where the emphasis throughout is on those who have died: vv. 6, 18, 20, 29, 51).

185. See "*skênos*," in Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (1940); cf. also Pierre Courcelle, *Connais-toi toi-même: De Socrate à saint Bernard* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1975), 2.345–414. Paul treats the body as a prison in Rom. 7:23; see also Rom. 8:23 and 2 Cor. 5:2, both in light of Ps. 102:20, where God "hears the groaning of the prisoner" and so "sets free those who were doomed to death," presenting the resurrection as an escape from prison.

186. Ps.-Plato, *Axiochus* 365e–66a. The grammar and vocabulary place this text well before the Christian era. Though the most detailed account of this concept-cluster is found in the fifth century *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* by Macrobius (11.1–6, cf. 11.19–20), the account most widely known and disseminated just before the rise of Christianity was that of Virgil, in his immensely famous epic the *Aeneid*. His doctrine of the soul is laid out at 6.724–51, where the body is identified as a burden (6.731–32; cf. also 6.720–1, 4.695), the cause of sin (6.732–38), and the soul as "celestial," "ethereal" and "pure" (6.730, 746–47), in contrast with the body, and the embodied soul "is locked up in darkness, a blind prison" (*clausae tenebris et carcere caeco*: 6.734). See also section 6.1.2 below.

187. For example: Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 1.22(52); Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* 3.3, 8.27, 10.38, 12.1–3; Philo *On Dreams* 1.26.

188. Lev. 6:28, 11:33, 15:12 (all using the exact same two words in the Septuagint).

189. Handmade pots versus gold ones: Lam. 4:3 (so see section 6 below, esp. n264); clay pots as irreparable: Jer. 19:11.

190. We have already seen it clearly in the belief systems of Philo and Josephus. Philo goes into even greater detail on this celestial-terrestrial scheme, and the body as a burden, in *De Cherubim* (esp. 113–15) and *De Gigantibus* (esp. 12–15 and 31). See also section 6.1.2 below.

191. Wisd. of Sol. 9.13, 16–17: compare w. 1 Cor. 2:10–12. On Paul's apparent use of this text in formulating many of his ideas in his letter to the Romans, see Wright (p. 163; on resurrection ideology in Wisd. of Sol., pp. 162–75). In Wisd. of Sol. 8.19–20 (w. 3:7 and 9.15) we find a view very similar to the two-body doctrine of Josephus.

192. Wisd. of Sol. 9.14–15: *phtharton sôma*, "perishable body"; *barunô*, lit. "weigh down, oppress, make heavy"; *psychê*, "soul," here equated with mind (*nous*); *brithô*, lit. "make heavy, lay a burden upon, weigh down"; *geôdes*, "earthly, made of earth."

193. See "*skênôma*," in Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (1940).

194. 2 Pet. 1:13–15.

195. As also Paul, who structures his life-to-resurrection argument in Rom. 8 around an Exodus theme (cf. Wright: pp. 221–22, 248, 257); cf. also Mark 12:26 (Luke 20:37), where Jesus cites Exodus 3:6 in support of the resurrection.

196. So "Latin translations . . . revise him in directions his fourth-century editor Rufinus considered to be more orthodox" (Bynum: pp. 63–64), as has been confirmed by comparing this Latin against surviving Greek fragments. Wright uncritically accepts the Rufinus text as Origen's, without explanation (p. 520), but it is incalculably corrupt and must not be cited in any construction of Origen's beliefs.

197. Origen *Contra Celsum* 7.32: *sômatikô topô*, lit. "bodily location"; *psychê* and *sôma*, "soul" and "body"; *asômatos*, lit. "without a body"; *aoratos*, lit. "unseen, invisible"; *oikeios*, here "suitable to" but retaining the usual meaning (as in Paul) of residence, home, being where you belong; *apekdunô* and *ependunô* are antonyms, meaning "strip off" and "put on" respectively, usually in reference to clothing (similar to the words used by Paul, cf. n180 above); *kreittonos*, lit. "stronger, mightier, more powerful," but often taking the simple meaning of "better, superior" in any sense (so also Heb. 11:35); *enduma*, lit. "thing you put on to wear," hence "garment"; *katharôteros*, lit. "cleaner, more pure," from *katharos*, "clean, unsoiled"; *aitherios*, lit. "made of ether, ethereal"; *ouranios*, lit. "heavenly, of heaven," hence "celestial" (same word used by Paul).

198. Origen *Contra Celsum* 5.18–24 (concepts from sections 18, 19, and 23 respectively; see also 6.29).

199. See analysis in Bynum (pp. 63–71, cf. also 73). The Methodius text survives only in a rare Slavonic translation, so extensive was the Church's attempt to suppress it.

200. On Origen's views, and their Orphic history, see: Alan Scott, *Origen and the Life of the Stars: A History of an Idea* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991).

201. As well as the myth that the tip of the coccyx would never disintegrate, so God could use it as a starting point for rebuilding our bodies (cf. Wright: p. 195n284, citing Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 28.3 and Leviticus 18).

202. So Raymond Collins (p. 571); Wright (pp. 314n5, 466).

203. So Conzelmann (p. 281, w. n15).

204. 1 Cor. 6:17. Indeed, by becoming one in spirit, even our flesh in this world becomes part of the "body" of the Lord: 6:15–16. See also Col. 3:3–4, 15 where resurrection requires sharing in the body of Christ, being "contained within it" as it were—and only by this means can we survive death.

205. Perhaps what is suggested by James 2:26.

206. Rom. 6:1–8. So: Dale Martin (pp. 131–32); Peter Lampe, "Paul's Concept of a Spiritual Body," *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, ed. Ted Peters, R. J. Russell, and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), pp. 103–14; Earle Ellis, "*Sôma* in First Corinthians," *Interpretation* 44 (1990): 132–44; and E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), pp. 453–63.

207. Rom. 9:6–8.

208. So 1 Thess. 4:14 (and perh. 5:10).

209. So: 1 Thess. 4:16: "the dead in Christ shall rise first"; Col. 3:3: the lives of the dead "are hidden with Christ in God"; etc.

210. 1 Cor. 7:12–17. See: Héring (pp. 169–71); Conzelmann (pp. 275–77); Fee (pp. 760–67). Vicariously washing away the sins of the already dead, and thereby procuring them a better residence in the afterlife, was already an Orphic belief: cf. Conzelmann (pp. 275–76n116, citing Plato *Republic* 364e–65a, as well as several inscriptions; on later attestations of the Christian practice: p. 276n117).

211. Hence I agree with Robert Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology: With Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), esp. pp. 159–83: though *sôma* could be used in antiquity to mean "person" in an abstract sense, Paul does not use it that way.

212. 1 Timothy 3:16.

213. Philippians 2:6–11. Rom. 1:3–5 lists only the incarnation, resurrection, and mission.

214. 1 Corinthians 15:5 (and see section 5.9). Verses 15:6–8 probably were not an element of the creed but merely additional encounters Paul himself added to be thorough, but 15:8 relates them all to his. 1 Corinthians 15:3 also mentions the atonement, as does Colossians 1:13–29, which also lists the incarnation and subjection.

215. That the Church is the new body of Christ on earth is one of the primary themes of Paul's entire theological understanding: Rom. 12:4–5; 1 Cor. 6:15, 6:19, 10:17, 12:12–20, 12:27; Eph. 1:22–23, 3:6, 4:12, 5:23, 5:30; Col. 1:18, 1:24, 2:17–19, 3:15. It is by participating in this body that one joins Christ's spirit and is thus preserved. This is clearly the only way immortality is possible in Paul's view (see section 5.7).

216. Rom. 8:9–10.

217. Acts 2:31 versus 1 Pet. 1:24 and 3:18 (*thanatôtheis men sarki zôopoiêtheis de pneumati*).

218. 2 Pet. 1:16, w. 17–18.

219. As he then all but says: 2 Pet. 1:20–21 (cf. 3:2). Note that resurrection "evidence" is also omitted when his eyewitness testimony is invoked earlier at 1 Peter 5:1.

220. Or perhaps not: Romans was not actually written by Paul, but Tertius (Rom. 16:22), and we cannot be entirely certain whether Tertius took dictation of every single word or merely wrote in Paul's name from notes or oral instructions. Had Paul actually read the letter, he would probably (though not certainly) still have signed it (as in 1 Cor. 15:21, Col. 4:18, 2 Thess. 3:17, and Philem. 19), and there is no signature in Romans. On the other hand, 1 Corinthians may have been coauthored by Sosthenes (1:1); Philippians, Colossians, and 2 Corinthians, by Timothy (1:1, 1:1, and 1:1); and 1 and 2 Thessalonians, by Timothy and Silvanus (1:1 and 1:1). The effect of their influence on those letters, if any, is unknown.

221. Just as in a similar section of 2 Corinthians that refers to ongoing escapes from death (2 Cor. 4:10–12)—that this is not a reference to the resurrection is clear, for (contra 2 Cor. 4:11) our resurrected body is neither "mortal" nor "flesh." That the context is that of ongoing escapes from death is also clear from vv. 4:7–9 (perhaps illuminating 1 Cor. 15:31–32). So also 2 Cor. 5:10, which refers to the things we did when in our earthly bodies. And see section 5.5.

222. Rom. 8:11–13.

223. Eph. 2:1–7; so also Col. 2:13.

224. This is Paul's point in 8:5–8. That the context is the here and now is also obvious from numerous surrounding verses: Rom. 8:4–9, 36–37 and 7:4–6, 9–11, 25.

225. 2 Cor. 5:6–8.

226. Ibid., 4:16–18.

227. 1 Cor. 5:5. And see n160 above.

228. Rom. 8:21.

229. Ibid., 7:14–25, esp. vv. 24 and 14 (cf. 8:15).

230. So Héring (p. 177).

231. 1 Cor. 3:1–2.

232. Ibid., 2:6–7. See n261 below.

233. Ibid., 9:1: *heôraka*, perfect active of *horaô*, lit. "see" and hence "perceive, understand, experience." For an excellent analysis of Paul's conversion experience in both the ancient and modern context, see Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990); and for further analysis of Paul's afterlife beliefs and their connection with the revelatory nature of his encounter with Christ: Alan Segal, "Paul," *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), pp. 399–440.

234. 1 Cor. 15:5–8: here Jesus *ôphthê*, "appeared," to every witness (using the aorist passive of *horaô*, hence lit. "was seen"). The same verb is repeated four times, without distinction, which implies fundamentally the same experience.

235. That Paul equates himself with an "abortion" (*ektrôma*, which means any premature birth, including miscarriages and the malformed) is explained by his subsequent elaboration: he is the least *worthy*, because he persecuted the church, like a rejected monster (1 Cor. 15:8–9). So Hêring (p. 162); Conzelmann (p. 259); Fee (pp. 732–34). See also Raymond Collins (pp. 537–38); Wright (pp. 327–29). Or, more subtly, he wasn't "fully gestated" when he was "born again"—for, unlike the other apostles who were with Jesus in life, he had not been prepared for the faith when it called him. This would fit his snatched-from-the-womb metaphor in Gal. 1:15–16 (which, in turn, confirms he is speaking of the same event in both places).

236. 1 Cor. 15:3–4 refers to scriptures, 5–8 to epiphanies.

237. Gal. 1:12.

238. Ibid., 1:16.

239. 1 Cor. 15:3–5 (esp. vv. 1 and 3).

240. So: 1 Cor. 14:6, 26, 30; 2 Cor. 12:1, 7; Eph. 1:17; Gal. 2:2.

241. See section 8.1 below.

242. 2 Thess. 1:7.

243. Gal. 1:16: "God revealed (*apokalypsai*) his son *in* me" sounds like an internal, spiritual encounter, something seen more with the spirit than the eyes. But that need not be assumed. See section 8.1 below.

244. Rom. 16:25–26. The double (parallel) *kata* construction implies equivalence between the Gospel-Kerygma and the Revelation, hence the one is the other. Verse 26 (a double genitive absolute) opens with *phaneroô* and closes with *gnôrizô*, both having the same meaning, with different connotations and (by their placement) different emphasis. The former derives from the language of light, exposure, seeing, the latter from the language of knowing, understanding, *gnosis*.

245. This is explicit in 2 Cor. 4:3–6, when rightly understood as following 3:14–16.

246. 2 Cor. 12:1–4: *apokalypsis* again, and now paired with *optasia*: lit. "a seeing"; *en sômati* and *ektos / chôris tou sômatos*, lit. "in body" and "outside / without the body"; *harpazô* implies rapid violent force, "sucked up" (the very same word Paul used of the ascension of the resurrected in 1 Thess. 4:17; see nn120, 147, 247); *arrhêta rhêmata*, lit. "things said that are too sacred to repeat" (see n261 below). Many believe Paul is talking about himself here. I am skeptical.

247. Just as in Revelation 4:1. Trips by the living to heaven and back were a common trope of the day. Examples are recorded in: Plato *Republic* 614.b–c; Plutarch *Divine Vengeance* (*Moralia* 563d–67f); Cicero *Dream of Scipio*; cf. Lucian *Lover of Lies* 25. In Jewish theology, the third heaven contained the New Jerusalem (b. Talmud, *Chagigah* 12b; see nn120, 147), and according to the apocryphal *Revelation of Moses*, Paradise as well (37.4–5, 40.1–2), just as Paul here says. God, of course, resides in the seventh and uppermost heaven, along with all disembodied souls (either before birth or after death).

248. Conversion from hostility: Gal. 1:13–15, 1 Cor. 15:9, Phil. 3:6; Delay before seeing anyone: Gal. 1:16–18. In fact, Paul emphatically asserts that he did not meet with anyone even then, except Peter and James, so if there was a Thomas with his famous testimony, or over 500 brethren who saw Jesus, Paul could not have heard it directly from them for yet another *fourteen years* (1:18–19, 2:1).

249. Hence Gal. 1:1, 6–9, 11–12, 16–19 (Paul even goes out of his way to *swear* by it: 1:20).

250. Contradictory accounts: Acts 9.3–8, 22.6–11, 26.12–18. Conflict with Galatians: Gal. 1:12–2:1, versus Acts 9:9–28, 22:12–20, 26:19–21, w. 21:15, 21:27ff. Wright is also skeptical (pp. 375–93).

251. Contra Wright (pp. 216, 226), Paul would not call a conscious state "sleep." That would be a contradiction in terms—without qualifying himself somewhere, which he never does. 2 Cor. 5:8–9 refers to our future existence in new bodies, and Phil. 1:23 refers to being free of toil and suffering (by sleeping in Christ until the resurrection). Paul's view is that of Eph. 5:14, where the language of resurrection is explicitly identified as the language of waking from sleep.

252. Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris* 35, 65 (*Moralia* 364f, 377b, on resurrection of Osiris), *On the E at Delphi* 9 (*Moralia* 389a, on resurrection of Dionysus), *How a Man May Become Aware*

of his Progress in Virtue 16 (*Moralia* 85d, referring to a wish that a human teacher would come back to life); so also Plato *Phaedo* 71e–72a (here the verbal form of *anabiôsis*, in a defense of reincarnation, wherein souls come back to life in new bodies; cf. also 72c–d, 89c, and *Crito* 48c; *Symposium* 203e for the dying and rising of Eros). The term *anabiôsis* is a word for the general resurrection in 2 Maccabees 7:9, as in Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 1.9 (quoting Theopompus, a historian from the fourth century BCE, as saying: "According to the [Persian] Magi, men will be resurrected and become immortal, and what exists will endure through their incantations," a fact also reported by his contemporary Eudemus of Rhodes, proving that the Jewish doctrine of resurrection actually derives from earlier Persian religion). Matthew (19:28) calls the general resurrection a *palingenesis*.

253. Though *egersis* appears in the NT only in Matthew (27:53), it is the nominal of *egeirô*, which Paul uses as extensively as *anistêmi* and its nominal *anastasis* (see any standard concordance), which, contra Wright (p. 218), does *not* mean "rise up again" but simply "rise up" or "raise up" (*stasis* = "a standing"; *ana-* = "up"). Their root sense is standing up from a prone position, used as often of rising from ordinary sleep, or even removing someone from one place to another (e.g., transplanting a population, as in Herodotus *Histories* 9.106), as of raising the dead (even in an ordinary pagan or medical sense of "resuscitation," e.g., Lucian, *Lover of Lies* 26; cf. Dale Martin, p. 122; used even of Old Testament "resurrections" in Heb. 11:35; New Testament "resurrections": Mark 5:42, 6:14–16; Matt. 9:25; Luke 8:55, 9:7–8; resurrection witnessed by Papias according to Eusebius: *History of the Church* 3.39.9; cf. also Acts 14:19–20). See entries in Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (1940); also, cf. entry F4 for "ana" on how "up to life" (*anabiôsis*) literally means "back to life," not (strictly speaking) "live again" (although the meaning is *essentially* the same here, it is not *literally* so, contra Wright: p. 178).

254. See the conclusion to my chapter, "The Burial of Jesus in Light of Jewish Law."

255. For another defense of the legend thesis (also assuming a two-body doctrine), which supplements and reinforces mine, see Adela Collins, "The Empty Tomb in the Gospel According to Mark," *Hermes and Athena: Biblical Exegesis and Philosophical Theology*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Thomas Flint (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), pp. 107–40 (w. rebuttal and counter-rebuttal: pp. 141–55).

256. Most evidently through Luke: Luke 24:1–2 (John 20:1), Luke 24:9–12 (John 20:2–8), Luke 24:3–8 (John 20:11–13), Luke 5:1–11 (John 21:2–14); but the influence of Matt. is also possible: Matt. 28:9–10 (John 20:14–18). As throughout his Gospel, John typically reorders words and events and uses his own vocabulary, but that does not exclude influence.

257. See the contributions to this volume by Jeff Lowder, Peter Kirby, and Evan Fales. On Matthew, see my chapter, "The Plausibility of Theft."

258. The polemical character of John 20:24–29 and Luke 24:37–43 is simply too obvious to deny (see also section 5.5 above).

259. Luke 1:1–3.

260. John 21:24, versus John 20:30–31, which certainly looks like the original ending of that Gospel (it also matches the point where Luke and Matt. end; likewise, 21:24–25 looks like an exaggerated duplication of 20:31). Material thereafter appears almost like an appendix,

comparable to Mark 16:9–20, and derives in part from a story *not* associated with the resurrection (Luke 5:1–11). See Wright (pp. 662–63, 675–78).

261. On such an "honest" use of what we today would call fiction, see Evan Fales, "Taming the Tehom," in the present volume. Hence Paul says there is a secret Christian doctrine, not revealed in his letters, that is reserved for mature members (1 Cor. 2:4–8; cf. 2 Cor. 12:4, with n247 and section 5.9). That was a commonplace in ancient religion, e.g., Plutarch *On Isis and Osiris* 58, 78 (*Morialia* 374e, 382e–f); similar passages can be found in Herodotus, Dionysius, Apuleius, etc.

262. Mark 9:43–48.

263. Ibid., 14:58 (cf. Matt. 26:61; repeated with some modifications in Mark 15:29): *kataluô*, lit. "utterly break up," hence "destroy"; *naos*, lit. the innermost part of a temple that contains the image of God, from *naiô*, "to reside, inhabit"; *cheiropoiêton* and *acheiropoiêton* , lit. "made with" and "made without" hands, respectively, but also probably a pun on *cheirôn*, "worse" (versus *cheiros*, "hand"), thus "worse-made" and "not-worse-made," respectively; *dia*, lit. "during the course of" three days (so in 15:29 it is *en*, "within" three days; cf. Matt. 27:40); *oikodomeô*, lit. "build a house," the verbal cognate of Paul's *oikodomê* (2 Cor. 5:1), probably not a coincidence (*kataluô* and *acheiropoiêton* are also directly from Paul: see section 5.6 and n180 above). Note that Mark specifies *allon*, "another, different" body, whereas Matthew (26:61, 27:40) and John (2:19) omit this word, thus *changing* the tradition to imply the *same* structure will be rebuilt. But at least they understood what Mark really meant. In contrast, Luke clearly did not understand the meaning at all (cf. Acts 6:13–14).

264. Cf. 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:18–22. John 2:19–22 makes this connection explicit. Note that Hebrews 9:11–12 and 9:24 speak of a tabernacle (*skênê*) and a holy place (*hagia*) "not made by hands" and "not of the present creation," but "greater and more perfect" and "in heaven." This refers to the divine residence (9:1–3), the very same thing as Mark, and Mark is talking about a new residence Christ will create after three days—meaning his resurrection body, which Paul *also* says will not be made with hands (2 Cor. 5:1). We can thus infer that the resurrection body will be a new creation, greater and more perfect, and resident in heaven, not a restored earthly body.

265. Mark 14:38 (cf. Rom. 7)

266. Mark 12:25; Matt. 22:30; Luke 20:34–36.

267. Which is *why* they do not intermarry, for marriage is entailed by our being flesh, per Gen. 2:22–24.

268. That Mark emulated and "transvalued" Homer is demonstrated by Dennis MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000). For the empty tomb narrative, see therein "Rescued Corpses," pp. 154–61, and "Tombs at Dawn," pp. 162–68.

269. Empedocles being a famous example: Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 8.67–69 (quoting the pre-Christian writer Heraclides); but legends about Moses also involved a disappearing body as evidence of ascension, e.g., Josephus *AJ* 4.326. These and many more examples in Charles Talbert, "Mythical Structure—1," *What Is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), pp. 27–31 (and 52n108). Plutarch alone relates four examples (and says there were many more) in *Romulus* 27–28.

270. 1 Cor. 15:4.

271. Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 100:7 (994), drawing on Job 14:20–22 (where in death man "departs" and then God "changes his appearance" to the point that "his body pains him, and he mourns over himself").

272. Mishnah *Yebamot* 16:3a–e: "You cannot testify to [the identity of a corpse] save by the facial features together with the nose, even if there are marks of identification in his body and garments: again, you can testify only within three days" of death. For examples of this law being cited: Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 65:20 (595), 73:5 (669–70); Midrash Rabbah, Leviticus 33:5.

273. Midrash Rabbah, Leviticus 18:1 (225–26). The idea that the soul rests three days in the grave before departing is also casually assumed in the Midrash Rabbah on Ruth 3:3 (43–44) and Ecclesiastes 1:34 (41–42).

274. Cf. Conzelmann (p. 256); Wright (pp. 199, 322). The ultimate reference on this third-day motif is still Karl Lehmann, *Auferwecht am Dritten Tag nach der Schrift* (Freiburg: Herder, 1969), cf. esp. 280–87, 323–33, 343. Fee (pp. 726–28), among other things, suggests the Jewish belief that corruption sets in on the third day might entail the savior's resurrection then, to fulfill Ps. 16:9–11 that the savior's body would not see corruption (but see n152 above). Other possibilities include Jonah 1:17 and 2 Kings 20:5.

275. On the additional idea that the third-day motif derives from the legend that the tree of life was created on the third day (which connects with Paul's resurrection midrash of Genesis in 1 Cor. 15 and the whole "new creation" theme, cf. n91 above), see Jens Christensen, "And that He Rose on the Third Day According to the Scriptures," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 4 (1990): 99–118.

276. Casket: Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris* 13 = *Moralia* 356b–d (called a "burial" at 42 = 368a); Sanhedrin: Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 1.5 and 1.6; Third day: Plutarch, op. cit. 13 and 39 = 356b–d and 366e–f (the latter describing a "searching" ceremony ending with his body being "found," in contrast to the search for Elijah); Full moon: ibid., 42 = 367e–f.

277. Cf. Acts 11:23, 17:2, 17:11 18:28; Rom. 1:2, 16:26; 1 Cor. 15:3–4; 2 Pet. 3:16.

278. Where Psalms 22, 23, and 24 are enumerated 21, 22, and 23, respectively.

279. Cry: Mark 15:34, Ps. 22:1; Taunt: Mark 15:29, Ps. 22:7; and Mark 15:30–32, Ps. 22:8; Garments: Mark 15:24, Ps. 22:18; Crucifixion: Ps. 22:16 (which might also have inspired the idea of having Christ crucified between two criminals).

280. Ps. 23:6b and 22:23–31, respectively. Psalm 23 also refers to the anointing of the head (Ps. 23:5) which is displaced to Mark 14:3, as part of Mark's reversal of expectation theme (see section 6.1.3 below), but still alluded to in Mark's transitional verse (16:1).

281. Ps. 24:3, then 24:7 (repeated in 24:9). That this Psalm was understood as referring to the messiah is obvious from Ps. 24:8 and 10: "Who is the King? The Lord strong and mighty. . . . The Lord of hosts, He is the King of Glory." Also, Heb. 9:11–12 and 9:24 describes Christ's ascension as entering "the holy place" of God in heaven.

282. Mark 16:4 (called a "door" in 15:46 and 16:3, though using *thura*). The *pylai aiônioi*, "ancient doors," evoke the door to "eternal life" (cf. Luke 18:18, 13:24–25; Matt. 7:13–14, 16:18), and the *pylas archontes*, "heads of the gate," evoke the "rulers of this age"

(*archontôn tou aiônos*) among whom is death (1 Cor. 2:6, 2:8, 5:5, 15:24–28; cf. Eph. 2:2; and Dale Martin: pp. 134–35; Wright: p. 460).

283. For a different but detailed case for the same conclusion, see: Gisela Kittel, "Das leere Grab als Zeichen für das überwundene Totenreich," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 96 (1999): 458–79.

284. Mark 16:2: *mia tôn sabbatôn* (genitive of separation). That this was a commonplace Hebraicism in Greek is shown by Paul's casual use of it in 1 Cor. 16:2. It also appears in Acts 20:7, in the context of a different resurrection narrative. That the phrase used in Mark is absolutely identical in Matthew (28:1), Luke (24:1), *and* John (20:1), despite the fact that both the article (*tôn*) and the plural are unnecessary (cf. John 20:19; Matt. 28:1; 1 Cor. 16:2; Septuagint, Psalms 47:1; Justin Martyr *Trypho* 27.5), suggests they all have their account from Mark, directly or indirectly. Indeed, unlike Matthew, John repeats *both* superfluous articles (i.e., *tê mia tôn sabbatôn*), a triple coincidence.

285. Ps. 24:1 (23:1): *psalmos tô Dauid tês mias sabbatôn*. The dative case ("for David") can indicate that the psalm was written for or by David. The genitive of *mia* (sc. *hêmera*, "day") is probably the genitive of time, hence the psalm is to be sung sometime during the first day (closest parallel is 94:1, "a psalm for David on the fourth day of the week," though here the dative is used; 92:1, "a psalm sung on the day of the Sabbath," uses the preposition *eis* plus the accusative, exactly as Matthew does in 28:1). Many of the psalms have had "instructions" like this added to their titles. For early commentary on this one: Didymus Caecus *Commentary on the Psalms 22–26.10*, cod. 65.11, who interprets the *tês mias* as a genitive of time and equates it with *eis* plus the accusative.

286. Another link is made with King Asa via 2 Chr. 16:14 (who famously reformed the Jerusalem cult: cf. 2 Chr. 14:2–5, 15:8, w. 1 Kgs. 15, 1 Chr. 14–16) by calling the tomb's door stone "very great" (Mark 16:4: *megas sphodra*; the spices burned for Asa were *megalên . . . sphodra*) and the tomb "hewn from the rock" (*latomeô* in Mark 15:46, *orussô* in 2 Chr. 16:14, but both mean "quarried," both passages using a relative clause, and introduced the same way: "in the tomb, which . . ."), as well as linking the burial to spices (*arômata*, same word as in Mark 16:1). Notably, 2 Chr. 16:14 also calls the tomb "his own," and that is just how Matt. 27:60 embellishes the story.

287. Mark 16:3: *apokylisei . . . ton lithon*, Gen. 29:8: *apokylisôsin ton lithon*. Jacob, of course, *is* Israel (Gen. 32:28), and the idea that his two wives "built the house of Israel" appears in Ruth 4:11. The names of the women in Mark might also be symbolic: Salome is the feminine of Solomon, an obvious symbol of supreme wisdom and kingship; Mariam is the sister of Moses and Aaron (Micah 6:4, 1 Chr. 6:3, Num. 26:59) who led the Hebrew women in song after their deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 15:20–21), and whose death begins the water-from-the-rock narrative (Num. 20:1–13); Magdala is a variant Hellenization of "tower," same as *Magdôlon* in the Septuagint—the biblical Migdol, representing the borders of Egypt, near which the Hebrews must camp to lure the Pharoah's army to their doom (Ex. 13:1–4), after which "they passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness three days" (Num. 33:7–8, on their way to the "twelve springs and seventy palm trees" of Elim, 33:9); Mary the mother of *Jacob* is an obvious reference to *the* Jacob.

So the two Mary's represent Egypt and Israel, and (on the one side) the borders of the Promised Land and the defeat of death needed to get across, and (on the other side) the founding of a new nation—both linked as sisters of Moses. The second Mary actually has two aspects in Mark: the mother of Jacob *and* Joseph (15:40; and possibly Jesus: 6:3), her second aspect emphasized at the burial (15:42), and her first at the resurrection (the very next verse: 16:1). The appellation "little Jacob" at the death of Jesus (Mark 15:40) may be meant to emphasize infancy, just as Joseph emphasizes old age (Gen. 37:3), as well as burial, the death of Jacob, the fortune of the twelve tribes, and opening a barren womb (48:21–50:26, 30:22–24; cf. n298), or to imply that Jesus, by submitting to God's soteriological plan, is the *greater* Jacob, the Jacob of the spirit rather than the flesh.

288. Explicit in John (4:14 and 7:38), who even has Jesus meet a woman at Jacob's well to deliver his message of salvation, and through her many are saved (4:4–30, 39).

289. The first day also known as the eighth day, on which children are circumcised: Justin Martyr *Trypho* 41. Spiritual circumcision: Phil. 3:3–5; Rom. 2:28–29, 15:8; Col. 2:11.

290. Cf. Epistle of Barnabas 15 and Justin Martyr *Apologia* 1.67; cf. 2 Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:15 (which actually links the new creation with the spiritual circumcision), Col. 1:15–18, 2 Pet. 3:13. Wright argues for a "New Genesis" theme within the entire structure of the Gospel of John (pp. 667–75; compare John 20:22 with Gen. 2:7).

291. Cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, 2nd ed. (1952), esp. pp. 156ff. (w. L. Brisson, *Orphée et l'Orphisme dans l'Antiquité Gréco-Romaine*, 1995).

292. Col. 3:1–7, where, like the Orphics, Paul also links the flesh with sin (Col. 3:8–9; so also Rom. 7–8), and salvation with abandoning the flesh for a heavenly existence (Col. 3:1–4). This also returns to Paul's resurrection analogy of clothing: we are to put aside the body of flesh (Col. 3:5–8, hence "get out of" the "old man" in 3:9, equivalent to the "outer man" of 2 Cor. 4:16–18; cf. Rom. 6:6) and "put on" the "new" body of the new man, which is the same in "pattern" with Christ's resurrected body (3:10; cf. 3:12, and 3:11 in light of 1 Cor. 15:28).

So the apocryphal *Epistle to Diognetus* 6.6–8 and *Acts of Thomas* 41 and 147 come much closer to Paul than Wright admits (pp. 493–94, 532–34), closer than almost any other later text. Thus, Paul's two-body doctrine of the resurrection (here used as a model to follow in our *present* life, though it will only be truly realized in the resurrection: Col. 3:4) is explicitly linked with the Orphic theology of the body as already dead, which he links with the "tomb" motif in 2 Cor. 5:1–4. Paul modifies the Orphic system in accord with Jewish categories and theology, thus producing a new system. For Paul we are not buried alive until baptism (per Rom. 6:4), but then we are buried *with Christ*, and thereby saved. But the basic idea is the same: we are to regard our body as already dead precisely because it is the cause of sin, just as the Orphics teach, and by living in the Spirit *now*, we will get spiritual bodies later (Gal. 5:16–25, cf. Rom. 7–8), hence merging Orphic bliss with Jewish resurrection soteriology.

293. Apart from the first century CE witness of Philo and Josephus, Eusebius attests to its presence in the thought of Aristobulus (*Praeparatio Evangelica* 13.12.5) and Artabanus (who even says Moses taught Orpheus: ibid., 9.27.4), both Jews writing in the second century BCE. See Carl Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors, Volume IV: Orphica* (Atlanta:

Scholars Press, 1996), cf. pp. 43–99. The doctrine also appears to have widely permeated pagan philosophy and lore: Dale Martin (pp. 115–17; for links in 1 Corinthians: 117–20, 126–29; Judaism in general: 118).

294. Plato (Socrates speaking), *Georgias* 493a: *sôma*, "body"; *sêma*, lit. "sign, mark," hence often "sign by which a grave is known" and therefore (by metonymy) the grave or tomb itself.

295. Plato, *Cratylus* 400b–c: *peribolon*, lit. "something cast around," hence corral, enclosure; *sôzô*, "to save"; *desmôtêrion*, "jailhouse," the same word used by Philo in *On the Migration of Abraham* 9 (see section 3 above); *eikôn*, "image, pattern," the same word used by Paul (see section 5.5 above); the use of *sôma* to mean "safe, lockbox" (a fairly rare usage) probably derives from the defective adjective *sôs* (n. pl. *sôa*), "kept safe," from *sôomai*, a synonym of the *sôzô* Socrates uses in the same sentence, which would link this Orphic interpretation of *sôma* to their doctrine of salvation. The connection between "body," "tomb," and "safe" was not esoteric: one of the most famous tombs in the ancient world was that of Alexander the Great (in Alexandria, a major center of Jewish intellectualism), which was called the *Sôma*.

296. Miroslav Marcovich, "The Gold Leaf of Hipponion," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 23 (1976): 221–24.

297. The initiate must also declare himself "a son of the weighty and of starry heaven," drawing in the terminology of our earthly part as a burden (*baros*) and of stars and heaven as our true abode (*ouranos asteroeis*). Likewise, the initiate will become a "king" among the dead, just as Paul envisioned every Christian becoming a "king" in the age to come (Rom. 5:17; even ruling over angels: 1 Cor. 6:3; cf. Wright: pp. 429–34).

298. The awkward abruptness of this ending matches the awkward abruptness of Mark's beginning (1:1), so it could well be the genuine ending—meant to lead the reader to reflection, discussion, or initiation. Mark was not writing history, after all, but the "Good News," so his ending does not have to make "historical" sense. On the later redaction of Mark's ending, see section 8.2 below.

If, on the other hand, an ending has been lost, it may have been suppressed. Wright's suggestion that Matt. 28:8–20 redacts the original Markan ending (p. 624) is attractive, but inconclusive (and not very helpful, since we can't know what Matthew changed). In favor of his case is the fact that Gen. 18:15 in the Septuagint has a sentence that ends just as unusually with "for she was afraid" (*ephobêthê gar*) in reference to Sarah receiving incredible news from an angel, almost identically to Mark's ending. Yet (in addition to Wright's arguments: pp. 617–24) the Genesis narrative there continues with a commission to save the righteous from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (similar in purpose to the commission of Jesus in Matthew), the opening of Sarah's womb was indeed linked with the resurrection in early Christian discourse (Rom. 4:19, 9:9, Heb. 11:11, 1 Pet. 3:6), and in Jewish lore the opening of the womb was linked with the opening of graves at the resurrection (e.g., b. Talmud *Berachoth* 15b: "just as the womb takes in and gives forth again, so the grave takes in and will give forth again," interpreting the "barren womb" of Prov. 30:15–16; cf. also *Sanhedrin* 92a).

299. Mark 4:30–32, 7:15, 10:29–30, 10:44, 12:1–11; also: 8:35, 10:30; Wright (pp. 405–408).

300. Mark 4:11–12, 33–34.

301. Mark 15:43–47, 16:1–8.

302. 1 Tim. 1:3–4, genealogies just like those conjured by Matthew (1:1–17, whose title *is* "the book of the genesis of Jesus") and Luke (3:23–38). All sorts of false doctrines were spreading in Paul's day, like an unstoppable virus: cf. Gal. 1:6–9; 1 Cor. 1:12, 3:4–6; 2 Cor. 11:4, 13; 2 Thess. 2:2–5, 15; 1 Tim. 4:1–3, 7, 5:15; 2 Tim. 2:16–18, 3:4–7, 9–10, 13–14; 2 Pet. 2:1–3, 3:16 (cf. 1:16); 1 John 4:1; Jude 3–4, 8–16; cf. also Rom. 16:17–18, Phil. 1:15–17, Hebr. 13:8–9, and Titus 3:9 (genealogies and questions again), 2 Pet. 1:16 (suspicion of fabricated myths).

303. On this early split between the two factions and their acceleration into extremist dogmas, see Gregory Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: Thomas and John in Controversy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); and Alan Segal, "The Gospels: A Contrast with Paul," *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), pp. 441–77. Bynum, too, lists several causes (pp. 26–27).

304. As we can infer from later treatises on resurrection, which all express the fear (different from Paul's) that denial of resurrection of the *flesh* was "dangerous" because it leads to hedonistic licentiousness: cf. Justin Martyr *On the Resurrection* 10; Athenagoras *Treatise on the Resurrection* 19; Tertulliuan *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 11; so also *Hermas* 5.7.1–4.

305. Cf. Dale Martin (pp. 107ff., esp. 135).

306. Hence popular lore was full of the literal raising of the dead: cf. Dale Martin (pp. 111–12, 122–23); and popular personal and funerary beliefs obsessed over integrity of the body: cf. Bynum (pp. 45–47, 48, 51–58).

307. Bynum (esp. pp. 26–27, 38n67, 40–44, 47n103, 49–51, 90–91, 99–100; see material in Dale Martin: pp. 115, 123; Wright: 487–88, 498–99).

308. Bynum (pp. 90–91, quoting Epistle 84.6).

309. Col. 3:11; Paul's misogyny was based on the inheritance of sin through Adam and Eve (1 Tim. 2:12–14), which of course would all be done away with.

310. William Lane Craig, "Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?" *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), p. 154.

311. A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 189.

312. Herodotus *Histories* 6.123 and 5.62–3, versus Thucydides 6.53–59.

313. In the *Histories* Herodotus states his sources or methods (e.g., 2.123; 1.5, 4.195), often gives different accounts of the same event (e.g., 1.3–5, 2.20–27, 5.86–87, 6.53–54, 7.148–52), often names his sources (e.g., 1.20–21, 2.29, 4.14, 4.29, 5.86–87, 6.53–54, 8.55, 8.65), and commonly expresses a healthy skepticism (e.g., 2.45, 3.16, 4.25, 4.31, 4.42, 4.95–96, 4.105, 5.86, 7.152). The Gospels do none of these things (beyond the trivial, e.g., John 21:23). For an example of what a *real* critical biographer of the period did when confronted by conflicting stories, contrast Suetonius' discussion of where Caligula was born (*Gaius* 8) with Luke and Matthew's conflicting accounts of the birth and childhood of Jesus (Luke 2:1–41 versus Matt. 1:18–2:23).

314. Sherwin-White's general argument is plagued with hyperbole. For a more balanced

view of the matter, see: Michael Grant, *Greek and Roman Historians: Information and Misinformation* (London: Routledge, 1995) and Charles Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983). On Herodotus specifically: Kenneth Waters, *Herodotos the Historian: His Problems, Methods, and Originality* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985); Donald Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989). Far from being a model of accuracy, Herodotus was widely known even in antiquity as the "Father of Lies," cf. Plutarch *On the Malice of Herodotus*; Cicero *Laws* 1.1.5 and *On Divination* 2.116; A. Momigliano, *Studies in Historiography* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 128–33; W. Pritchett, *The Liar School of Herodotos* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1993).

315. Contrast Mark 1:1 with Luke 1:1. Unlike Matthew and Mark, Luke probably believed he was writing history, and may have believed, though wrongly, that Mark had, too. On Luke's genre: Charles Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1974). On Matthew's didacticism, see my chapter, "The Plausibility of Theft," and Evan Fales, "Taming the Tehom." On Mark's, see the whole of section 6 above. Luke may have cribbed most if not all of his historical "facts" from Josephus: Steve Mason, "Josephus and Luke-Acts," *Josephus and the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), pp. 185–229, summarizing Max Krenkel, *Josephus und Lucas: Der Schriftstellerische Einfluss des Jüdischen Geschichtschreibers auf den Christlichen* (Leipzig: H. Haessel, 1894) and Heinz Schreckenberg, "Flavius Josephus und die lukanischen Schriften," *Wort in der Zeit: Neutestamentliche Studien*, ed. Karl Rengstorf and Wilfrid Haubeck (Leiden: Brill, 1980), pp. 179–209; see also Gregory Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

316. See Charles Talbert, "Mythical Structure—1 & 2," *What Is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), pp. 25–89.

317. Tacitus *Annals* 3.44, 3.19, and 4.11, respectively.

318. Lucian, for example, presents firsthand proof of just how quickly legends could arise and spread in *The Death of Peregrinus* 39–40.

319. William Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), esp. p. 195.

320. Seneca *Natural Questions* 7.1.2 and 7.25.3, *Phaedra* 788–94, *Hercules Oetaeus* 523–27, *On Benefits* 5.6.4; Pliny *Natural History* 2.54 and 25.10 (w. 2.53, 2.43); Statius *Thebaid* 6.685–88; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7.207–209 and 12.262–64, 14.365–68, *Amores* 1.8.12–14, *Heroides* 6.85–86; Lucan *Pharsalia* 6.499–506; Plutarch *Advice to Bride and Groom* (*Moralia* 145c–d), *Nicias* 23.1–3, *Aemilius Paulus* 17.7–11; Lucian *Lover of Lies* 14; Hippolytus *Refutation of All Heresies* 37; Marcus Manilius *Astronomica* 1.226; Apuleius *Metamorphosis* 1.3.1, 1.8.4; Apollonius *Argonautica* 4.57–67; Aristophanes *Clouds* 749–52; Plato *Gorgias* 513a (cf. also: *Papyri Magicae Graecae* §34; Cicero *On the Republic* 1.23; Livy *From the Founding of the City* 44.38.5–9; Quintus Curtius Rufus *History of Alexander* 4.10.1–7; Valerius Maximus *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* 8.11, 11.1; Tacitus *Annals* 1.28; Cassius Dio *Roman History* 60.26.1; Frontinus *Stratagems* 1.12.8).

321. Plutarch *On Superstition* (*Moralia* 167e), and *Life of Coriolanus* 38.4, respectively. For

many more examples of popular gullibility and ignorance, see Plutarch's *On Superstition*, as well as an excerpt from Seneca's *On Superstition* preserved in Augustine, *City of God* 6.10; and works by Lucian like *The Lover of Lies*, *The Death of Peregrinus*, and *Alexander the Quack Prophet*. See also the scholarship cited in n342 below, and Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981); C. P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); Graham Anderson, *Sage, Saint and Sophist: Holy Men and Their Associates in the Early Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 1994); and Keith Hopkins, *A World Full of Gods: The Strange Triumph of Christianity* (New York: Free Press, 1999).

322. See my discussion of recalcitrant belief in my chapter, "The Plausibility of Theft."

323. Paul and his audience did not seem very impressed by rational, historical, scientific, or dialectical evidence (e.g., 1 Cor. 2, esp. vv. 13–14), so they rarely ever get any mention in his letters. Instead, he almost always "proves" the truth by appealing to the efficacy of his miracle working (1 Cor. 2:4–5; 2 Cor. 12:12; cf. 1 Thess. 1:5, Heb. 2:1–4), to revelation (1 Cor. 2:6–10, 12:8, 13:2; 2 Cor. 12:7; Gal. 2:1; cf. Heb. 2:1–4; Paul occasionally distinguishes between his opinion and instructions from God, e.g., 1 Cor. 7:12, 7:25 versus 14:37), and to his "suffering" as proof of his sincerity (2 Cor. 11:23–27, 12:7–10; cf. 1 Thess. 1:5). That's pretty much it. After all, "truth" had to be grasped spiritually, on faith (1 Cor. 2:15–16). Scripture also carried more authority than anything we would accept as "evidence" today (cf. e.g., Acts 17:2–4, 11–12; 18:28).

324. *Vita Genofevae* ("Text A"), cf. Jo Ann McNamara and John Halborg, *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), pp. 17–37 (relevant sections = monsters: 34; righted ships: 39; exorcisms: 44–47, etc.; calmed storms: 50; oil: 51; water: 19; healings: 20, 32, 36, etc.; blinded thieves: 23, 33, etc.).

325. Herodotus *Histories* 8.37–38.

326. Ibid., 2.123, with 1.20–21, 2.29, 4.14, 4.29, 5.86–87, 6.53–54, 8.55, 8.65, etc.

327. Ibid., 8.55, 8.129, 7.57, and 9.120, respectively.

328. Josephus *BJ* 6.288.

329. Cf. Philip J. Klass, *The Real Roswell Crashed Saucer Coverup* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1997); Karl T. Pflock, *Roswell: Inconvenient Facts and the Will to Believe* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2001).

330. Mark 15:33 and 15:38.

331. Gilbert Garraghan, *A Guide to Historical Method* (Chicago: Fordham University Press, 1946): §149a. See: Neville Morley, *Writing Ancient History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 67–68; Robert Shafer, *A Guide to Historical Method*, 3rd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1980), p. 77; Louis Gottschalk, *Understanding History: A Primer of Historical Method* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950), pp. 45–46.

332. See Lucian's exposure of the Glycon cult in *Alexander the Quack Prophet*, and of the claims of Proteus Peregrinus in the *Death of Peregrinus*, as model examples.

333. Cf. James M. Robinson, "Jesus from Easter to Valentinus (or to the Apostles' Creed)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101 (1982): 5–37. Contra Wright (p. 626) no "conspiracy" needs to be invented here: the evidence of textual suppression and alteration throughout the Christian tradition is overwhelming and undeniable (indeed, horrifying and

lamentable), yet did not require any organized conspiracy—unwanted texts were simply not preserved, and sects that wanted them were actively hunted down and destroyed. This is a known fact of history. Alternative views thus come to us almost solely by pure accident (e.g., Nag Hammadi), or through the distorting filter of "orthodox" writers (e.g., the antiheretical literature). That is not a coincidence.

334. Plutarch *Romulus* 27–28; cf. Cicero *Laws* 1.3, *Republic* 2.10; Ovid *Fasti* 2.491–512; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Roman Antiquities* 2.63.3; Tertullian *Apology* 21.

335. Livy *From the Founding of the City* 1.16.2–7. Livy also says the Proculan vision took place "at the break of dawn," the same time Mark places the encounter with the prophetic young man.

336. Pliny the Younger (to his friend Licinius Sura), *Letters* 7.27.1–3 (written between 97 and 108 CE); cf. Tacitus *Annals* 11.21. Curtius Rufus became a consul in 43 CE and may have still been alive as an old man in Pliny's youth.

337. Hence Pliny later relates a story in which some phantoms *actually* cut a slave's hair (*Letters* 7.27.12–14), thus being able to physically interact with the world.

338. Osiris: Plutarch *On Isis and Osiris* 18, 20–21, 35, 54 (*Morialia* 358a–b, 359a–d, 365a, 373a–b). Theseus: Plutarch *Theseus* 35.4–36.1–2, *Cimon* 8.5–6; Pausanias *Description of Greece* 1.15.3; cf. Robert Garland, *Introducing New Gods: The Politics of Athenian Religion* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 82–98; Emily Kearns, *The Heroes of Attica* (London: University of London, 1989), pp. 120–24. The resurrection of Theseus became a popular theme in Athenian art within thirty years of the event: cf. J. Neils and S. Woodford, *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* 7.1 (1994): 922–51; H. A. Shapiro, *Art and Cult under the Tyrants in Athens* (Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1989), pp. 143–49.

339. See Robin Lane Fox, "Seeing the Gods," *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), pp. 102–67, where the evidence is thoroughly surveyed. The New Testament attests to the Jewish variant of the same belief (that angels visit us in disguise to test us): Heb. 13:2.

340. For a masterful treatment of the role of hallucination in the ancient Jewish tradition, engaging both history and science, see Alan Segal, "Religiously-Interpreted States of Consciousness: Prophecy, Self-Consciousness, and Life After Death," *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), pp. 322–50. See also in the present volume: Keith Parsons, "Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli on the Hallucination Theory," and Evan Fales, "Taming the Tehom."

341. On current scientific understanding of religious experience: John Horgan, *Rational Mysticism: Dispatches from the Border between Science and Spirituality* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003); Robert Buckman, *Can We Be Good Without God? Biology, Behavior, and the Need to Believe* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002); Eugene D'Aquili and Andrew Newberg, *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* (New York: Ballantine, 2001) and *The Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Religious Experience* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999); Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Joseph Giovannoli, *The Biology of Belief: How Our Biology Biases Our Beliefs and Perceptions* (Rosetta Press, 2000). But still important is William James, *The Varieties of Religious Expe-*

rience: A Study in Human Nature (1902), with Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

342. On the culture of visionary epiphany in the ancient world, see: Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium: The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 408–13, 594–95; Robin Lane Fox, "Seeing the Gods," *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), pp. 102–67; E. R. Dodds, "Dream-Pattern and Culture-Pattern," *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951), pp. 102–34 (also, on prophetic trances and ecstasies: "The Blessings of Madness," pp. 64–101); crucial context is still provided by A. D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1933). Also: Wright (pp. 689–91).

343. Peter Slade and Richard Bentall, *Sensory Deception: a Scientific Analysis of Hallucination* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), cf. pp. 69–71. Their survey examined various studies in 1894, 1948, 1968, and 1983. Page numbers in subsequent paragraphs refer to this book. See also Leonard Zusne and Warren Jones, *Anomalistic Psychology: A Study of Extraordinary Phenomena of Behavior and Experience* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum Associates, 1982).

344. See Richard Carrier, "From Taoist to Infidel" (The Secular Web, 2001: www.infidels.org/library/modern/testimonials/carrier.html).

345. For the connection between this phenomenon and the origin of Christianity, see Jack Kent, *The Psychological Origins of the Resurrection Myth* (London: Open Gate, 1999).

346. See the conclusion to my chapter "The Burial of Jesus in Light of Jewish Law" for a full list of possible correlating causes for the origin of Christian belief; on the cultural and theological reasons such phenomena would include or inspire specifically an idea of Christ's *resurrection*, instead of some other spiritual belief about Jesus, see Richard Carrier, "Whence Christianity? A Meta-Theory for the Origins of Christianity," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2005).

347. So the original accounts may have been of typical trance state or hypnagogic visions, like those recorded in Acts (7:55–56, 10:1–7, 11:5–14, 12:6–11, 16:9–10, 22:17–21). Notably, all the Gospels place the first appearances near dawn.

348. The function of religious experience in moving a percipient from a peripheral to a central social role, even when dangerous (and of contrary social pressures to limit who has such experiences: see section 8.5 below), is thoroughly discussed in Evan Fales, "Scientific Explanations of Mystical Experiences, Part I: the Case of St. Teresa," *Religious Studies* 32 (1996): 143–63; "Scientific Explanations of Mystical Experiences, Part II: The Challenge to Theism," *Religious Studies* 32 (1996): 297–313; and "Can Science Explain Mysticism?" *Religious Studies* 35 (1999): 213–27; drawing in part on I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

349. Claridge McCreery, "A Study of Hallucination in Normal Subjects," *Personality and Individual Differences* 2:5 (November 1996): 739–47.

350. Luke 8:2 (Mark 16:9).

351. Phillip Wiebe, *Visions of Jesus: Direct Encounters from the New Testament to Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), esp. pp. 54–83; grasping of hands: 75; touching of fore-

head: 76; melting snow: 74; opening a door: 77; mass events: 77–82; unexpected nature: 212; quote: 213. All sorts of modern-day "miraculous" experiences are also documented and analyzed by John Cornwell, *The Hiding Places of God: A Personal Journey into the World of Religious Visions, Holy Objects, and Miracles* (New York: Warner Books, 1991).

352. Mark 14:28, 16:8 (1 Cor. 15:5).

353. The definitive study on this issue is now James Kelhoffer's *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and Their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000). See also: Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies,1971), pp. 122–26, and *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 226–29; C. S. C. Williams, *Alterations to the Text of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1951), pp. 40–45.

In sum, a solid case on internal linguistic grounds has long stood against the authenticity of the forged ending, hence Ezra Gould, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1896), pp. 301–304. And though the forged ending was possibly circulating by the third century, it does not appear in any of the earliest extant manuscripts, which all date to the fourth century—and it is also missing from the earliest manuscripts in translation (Syriac, Coptic, Georgic, and Armenian), whose textual tradition was far removed from that of the forgery tradition, thus corroborating the original ending at 16:8. Wright also discusses the evidence, coming to the same conclusion, but then presents a case for a lost ending resembling Matthew's (pp. 617–24). Though I suspect Mark ended his Gospel just as we have it, I find Wright's thesis attractive, if unhelpful (see section 6.1.3 above, esp. n298).

354. Luke explicitly (24:13, 33, 47–53), and John by implication (20:19, i.e., since it is the very same day, they must still be in Jerusalem, since Mary goes to and from wherever they are three times, even before the main appearance: 20:2, 11, 18–19).

355. John 21:1–6 versus Luke 5:1–11. See n363 below.

356. See section 6, esp. n260 above.

357. Angel: Matt. 28:2–8; Mary: 28:9–10; Mountain: 28:16–20.

358. See my chapter, "The Plausibility of Theft."

359. Matt. 28:17: *distazô*, from *dissos*, "divided, disagreeing" or "doubtful, ambiguous" (*dis* meaning "two, twice"), so "of two minds," and therefore to be doubtful or to hesitate between two options (like doubt and belief). This does not suggest a resolution, but maintaining a state of indecision, thus it cannot be interpreted as meaning they doubted for a time and then worshipped—that would have to be stated.

360. Cf. Ex. 32, where unbelief is death. Note the elements Matthew borrows from the Moses parallel throughout his narrative: third day, morning, lightning, fear, earthquake, and meeting God on a mountain (Exodus 19:16–18, 20:18, which also contain resurrection images from Paul, like the eschatological cloud and trumpet).

361. Ps. 132:7 (= 131:7 in the Septuagint). Note that the parallel passage in John also associates this encounter with Christ's ascension (John 20:17), but misses the Psalmic connection. Also, as Wright notes (641n29), "worship" is a strong Matthaean theme, yet in nine

other verses that use the motif, "feet" are never mentioned (2:2, 8, 11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:17). Their insertion here is therefore a marker.

362. Luke 24:23 (cf. 24:4–9), just as in Mark 16:6 and Matthew 28:6. John deliberately eliminates this thread by placing the angels *after* the belief arises and having them reveal no information at all (20:8, then 20:12–14).

363. Luke 24:15–16, then 24:30–31, 35; by deduction: 24:32. John (or his later redactor) rewrites this story completely, by merging it with the tale of the "miraculous catch" (which Luke reported as happening in Jesus' lifetime, not after his death: 5:1–11), cf. John 21:1–13, esp. 21:4 (Jesus in disguise), John 21:7 (he is "recognized"), 12:12 (by deduction more than by sight), John 21:13 (Jesus takes bread and fish and gives it to them, presumably having broken it first). See n260 above. The passage describes the encounter "mystically," as Jesus "making himself known" (*phaneroô*: 21:1, 14). It also draws on Luke's focal encounter by having Jesus *here* ask for something to eat (John 21:5 versus Luke 24:41–43).

364. Luke also inverts the geography: Ovid reports that Proculus was going *from* Alba Longa *to* Rome (*Fasti* 2.499), which is from a minor city on a mountain to a central city in a plain, whereas Luke makes the journey *from* Jerusalem *to* Emmaus, so *from* a central city on a mountain, *to* a minor city in a plain. Both journeys are toward the sea, and the distances in both cases are nearly identical, an unlikely coincidence (about fourteen miles—though Luke incorrectly estimates seven). Luke is also the only Gospel author to depict Christ's ascension to heaven (24:51; Acts 1:9–11), another link to Romulus. As for why he puts *two* men on the road, Luke has a penchant for doubling (two angels at the tomb, two men on the road, and two angels at the ascension: Luke 24:4, 13; Acts 1:10). Still, the only disciple named is Cleopas, which in Luke's spelling could be an eponym, for it means "All the Glory" or "All the Good News" (*Kleos* + *Pas*). For a more complete argument that Luke is emulating the Proculan encounter, see: A. Ehrhardt, "The Disciples of Emmaus," *New Testament Studies* 10 (1963/64): 187–201, with C. H. Dodd, "The Appearances of the Risen Christ," in *Studies in the Gospels*, ed. D. E. Nineham (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), pp. 9–36.

365. Luke 24:36.

366. Luke 24:12 and 24:24; a direct parallel to John 20:3–8, for whom the empty tomb has finally become an explicit proof of the resurrection (v. 8).

367. Luke 24:37 (fear he's a spirit), 24:38–40 (first proof), 24:41–43 (second proof).

368. John 20:19–23 (appears among them, shows hands—and, this time, his side, given 19:34), then Jesus does it all again for Thomas a week later, this time in explicit detail (John 20:24–29). One wonders why it was okay for Thomas to touch him but not Mary, or why Jesus didn't keep his word to Mary that he would ascend to heaven *before* this event (20:17), or where he was in the meantime (versus Acts 1:1–8).

369. Hence invoking 1 Cor. 15:4; Lk. 24:44–47 (esp. vv. 46; cf. 24:25–27). Note that John deliberately suppresses this theme, by saying the empty tomb—and *not* scripture—led to their belief (20:9). Likewise, every reference to the raised Jesus giving them a scripture lesson has been removed from all John's appearance accounts, despite their obvious parallels in Luke (20:19–29 and 21:4–25). John also eliminates angelic epiphany as a source of their belief (cf. 20:2, 12–14; n362).

370. 1 Thess. 4:16–17. Logically (Luke would reason), if Christ will descend, he must have ascended, a train of thought made explicit in Acts 1:11. For the political and theological subtext of Luke's ascension narrative, see Wright (pp. 654–56). Some manuscripts lack the reference to going up to heaven, and merely say "he left them," which would agree more with an ordinary epiphany event. Most editors are uncertain which version is genuine, but the expanded verse is more consistent with Luke's method, aims, and subsequent narrative (Acts 1:9–11).

371. 1 Cor. 15:6 and Acts 2:1 (w. 2:2–13). For a survey of the case for linking these two events, cf. Gerd Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994): §4.1.3.8 (pp. 100–108); see also: Conzelmann (p. 258); Fee (p. 730); Raymond Collins (pp. 535–36); against a connection: Wright (pp. 324–25), though I find it hard to imagine Paul meant they were available for interrogation—he names no one, nor says where they are, thus the Corinthians would not know whom to ask; nor is it plausible that anyone, much less Paul, actually counted them, or interviewed every single one of them to verify that they all saw the same thing (or actually saw *anything*, as opposed to claiming they did—or someone *else* claiming they did). See also Robert M. Price's chapter "Apocryphal Apparitions: 1 Corinthians 15:3–11 as a Post-Pauline Interpolation," in the present volume.

372. John 20:14–18. The Emmaus event (and other features of Luke's account) also derives from Luke's apparent scheme to structure his resurrection narrative in parallel with his nativity and presentation narratives (Wright: pp. 649–51). The Emmaus meal also has symbolic import within Luke's Gospel (Wright: p. 652).

373. Cf. 1 Tim. 2:11–15—and 1 Cor. 14:34–35, there precisely in the context of announcing to the Church one's revelations and epiphanies.

374. 1 Cor. 14:23–31, cf. 12:7–10.

375. Cf. Daniel Schacter and Joseph Coyle, *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains, and Societies Reconstruct the Past* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Elizabeth Loftus and James Doyle, *Eyewitness Testimony: Civil and Criminal*, 3rd ed. (Charlottesville, VA: Lexis Law, 1997).

376. 1 Cor. 15:1, 3, 11 and Gal. 1:11–12.

377. This would also be the purpose of the secret doctrines to which Paul refers (see nn246, 261 above).

378. So troubling was this problem that Origen was forced to argue that Christ's resurrected body was *invisible*, and could only be seen by properly prepared believers (*Contra Celsum* 2.64–67; cf. Wright: pp. 521–24).

379. Acts 7:55–56.

380. Gary Habermas and J. P. Moreland, *Beyond Death: Exploring the Evidence for Immortality* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), p. 115.

6

THE CASE AGAINST THE EMPTY TOMB

PETER KIRBY

Many scholars doubt the historicity of the empty tomb.[1] I intend to set out the reasons for disbelieving the empty tomb story. I will argue that the empty tomb narrative is the invention of the author of Mark. This conclusion will be supported by showing that all reports of the empty tomb are dependent upon Mark, that there are signs of fictional creation in the empty tomb narrative in Mark, that the empty tomb story as told by Mark contains improbabilities, and that other traditions of the burial and appearances support a reconstruction of the events that excludes the discovery of an empty tomb.

IF NOT AN EMPTY TOMB, THEN WHAT?

There are at least four other possibilities.

1. Jesus was left hanging on the cross for the birds.[2]
2. The Romans disposed of the body, perhaps in a "limed pit."[3]
3. The body of Jesus was buried by the Jews in some sort of criminal's grave.[4]
4. The body of Jesus remained buried in a tomb.

On the face of it, each one of these hypotheses is plausible. Any one of them would provide an alternative scenario to the empty tomb story, and it is the purpose of this paper to argue that the empty tomb story is a fiction. Thus, while I seek to show that the story of the discovery of the empty tomb of Jesus is most likely a fiction, it isn't necessary to choose a specific alternative. However, a few pieces of evidence are suggestive; for example, the tradition of the burial of Jesus "in the sand" would tend to exclude the first and fourth alternatives.

DEPENDENCE ON MARK

Several writers have drawn attention to the fact that Paul nowhere mentions the empty tomb in his letters.[5] To this it may be objected that Paul is not an encyclopedic author, and this objection is not without merit. For my purposes, it is sufficient to note that Paul offers no evidence for a pre-Markan tradition of an empty tomb. This allows me to argue that the empty tomb story appears only in documents dependent upon Mark. For reasons of space, I refer readers to the redaction-critical studies noted in order to find more detailed argumentation.

Concerning the tomb burial and empty tomb story, Fuller states, "Here Matthew follows Mark, with only minor alterations."[6] Herman Hendrickx analyses the story of the visit to the tomb, the presentation of the angel, and the reaction of the women with the conclusion that "the details found in Matthew but not in Mark are not to be attributed to additional information about the events, but rather to the particular way in which Matthew edited the tradition he found in Mark."[7] Hendrickx also studies verses 9–10 in detail and states, "Matt. 28:9–10 is composed by Matthew to serve as transition between the account of the tomb and the appearance and commission in Galilee (Matt. 28:16–20):"[8] Matthew provides no new information concerning the burial by Joseph of Arimathea or the discovery of the empty tomb by the women, and there is nothing to suggest the opposite opinion that the author of Matthew had independent traditions at his disposal.

Perrin observes several redactional changes to Mark in Luke: the narrative is written better, the young man in Mark becomes "two men in dazzling apparel," the message of the angel has been changed from an exhortation to

send the disciples to Galilee into a passion prediction, and the women are said to have returned to speak with the disciples.[9] Perrin also notes that the change of the appearances from Galilee to Jerusalem fits Luke's scheme in which the faith spreads from Jerusalem out to the ends of the earth.[10] Herman Hendrickx examines the question of redaction in 24:1–12 in detail.[11] Hendrickx states: "Summing up, we would say that, although some scholars tend to reduce Luke's dependence on Mark to secondary reminiscences, the opinion of those who hold that Mark 16:1–8 is the basic account which by itself sufficiently explains the Lucan exposition enjoys a higher degree of probability."[12]

Many believe that the Gospel of John is literarily independent from the synoptics, and I do not intend to challenge that view in this essay. Nevertheless, I would maintain that, even if John is literarily independent, the section containing the empty tomb narratives is based on oral tradition that has been influenced by the synoptic gospels.[13] There is evidence for synoptic influence in the return visit of Mary Magdelene. The author of John describes only Mary Magdelene as a visitor to the tomb, and so it is fitting that the author describes an appearance of the Lord to Mary alone, but the story is evolved from the tradition of the appearance to the women in Matthew. Hendrickx argues that the appearance to the women in Matthew is redactional, and so the Johannine account has been influenced by the Matthean story. After making several observations about the story, Bode comments, "John's second visit of Mary shows many signs of being developed by the help of words and themes from synoptic tradition and Johannine motifs found elsewhere."[14] Reginald Fuller comments on the redactional character of the earlier scene with Peter and the beloved disciple.[15] Several have observed the numerous parallels between Luke and John against the other two gospels.[16] It is reasonable to suggest that Luke has influenced the Johannine tradition. Such an explanation would account for the coincidences between Luke and John previously in their Gospels as well as in their final chapters, in which these two evangelists alone narrate appearances to the disciples in Jerusalem.

Many make much fuss over the contradictions between the resurrection narratives, but my interest in them lies solely in their function as a linchpin in the argument that the empty tomb stories are all dependent on the Gospel of Mark. I will not list such discrepancies, not only because this has been done many times before, but more importantly because the matter under

contention is not biblical inerrancy. My interest is in understanding the cause of these discrepancies. My theory is that the evangelists freely shaped their resurrection narratives with theological concerns, not on the basis of historical knowledge, and that their few agreements derive from dependence, particularly dependence on the account in the Gospel of Mark for the empty tomb story.

Bode makes the following observations:

> The only Easter event narrated by all four evangelists concerns the visit of the women to the tomb of Jesus. These texts include: Mark 16:1–8, Matt. 28:1–8, Luke 24:1–12, John 20:1–13. The accounts in themselves present a many-faceted problem, which has been characterized as arising from their palpable differences, frequent contradictions in fundamental matters, evidence of a long development process striving partly to harmonize and partly to express earlier accounts in terms of later convictions. The problem cannot be solved in a few words, but the beginning of a solution will come from a recognition of the themes and views proper to each evangelist.[17]

After describing some discrepancies in four pages, John T. Theodore writes:

> What are the facts? Which statements of the evangelists are correct? Sad to say, none can tell. All that can be said is that the Gospel of Mark, the oldest Gospel, from which the other evangelists drew most of their materials, was used by them with great freedom, and that their disagreements are indicative of the fact that when these narratives were recorded by them there was no definite and settled tradition concerning the incidents around the tomb of Jesus.
>
> This does not necessarily mean that the evangelists tried to deceive their readers. To them each added detail became a conviction, however ill-founded, unverified and unverifiable, until a string of legends was accepted as historical facts.[18]

Thus the discrepancies between the gospels highlight what redaction criticism explains: the post-Markan gospel narratives of the resurrection are legends and fictions built up around the empty tomb story in the Gospel of Mark. The statement made by James D. G. Dunn that the four gospels provide "united testimony" of "at least two or three different accounts" of the empty tomb is wrong.[19] Archbishop Peter Carnley writes:

> The presence of discrepancies might be a sign of historicity if we had four clearly independent but slightly different versions of the story, if only for the reason that four witnesses are better than one. But, of course, it is now impossible to argue that what we have in the four gospel accounts of the empty tomb are four contemporaneous but independent accounts of the one event. Modern redactional studies of the traditions account for the discrepancies as literary developments at the hand of later redactors of what was originally one report of the empty tomb. . . . There is no suggestion that the tomb was discovered by different witnesses on four different occasions, so it is in fact impossible to argue that the discrepancies were introduced by different witnesses of the one event; rather, they can be explained as four different redactions for apologetic and kerygmatic reasons of a single story originating from one source.[20]

Since all accounts of the empty tomb are dependent on Mark, the story hangs by a slender thread indeed. The evidence that follows will cut that thread by showing that the story in Mark is most likely fictional.

FICTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS IN MARK

One well-known indication in favor of fiction is the existence of previous stories of the same type on which the narrative could have been modeled. There is some precedent for a searching-and-not-finding-the-body story in the Jewish scriptures. In 2 Kings 2:9–18, Elijah is carried off into heaven in a whirlwind in the presence of Elisha. But some believe that Elijah may still be around somewhere, so they persuade Elisha to send fifty men "who searched for three days without finding him." Obviously the story is different in the Gospel of Mark because the women do not go to the tomb with the purpose of searching for Jesus but simply to anoint him (cf. Mark 16:1). However, the act of the women evinces poor faith and misunderstanding concerning the resurrection of Jesus, and in that way the stories are similar.

There is evidence that Joseph of Arimathea is a fictional character and that the tomb burial story in the Gospel of Mark is also fictional. Roy Hoover notes, "the location of Arimathea has not (yet) been identified with any assurance; the various 'possible' locations are nothing more than pious guesses or conjectures undocumented by any textual or archaeological evidence."[21]

Richard Carrier speculates, "Is the word a pun on 'best disciple,' *ari{stos} mathe{tes}*? *Matheia* means 'disciple town' in Greek; *Ari-* is a common prefix for superiority."[22] Since commentators have seen the burial by the outsider Joseph of Arimathea as a contrast to the failure of the disciples and intimates of Jesus, the coincidence that Arimathea can be read as "best disciple town" is staggering.

Norman Perrin explains the function of the empty tomb story in the Gospel of Mark by connecting it with Mark's theme of discipleship. All those who knew Jesus fail, including the three named male disciples, Peter, James, and John, as well as the three named female followers. The named women who expect to find and anoint the corpse of Jesus in the tomb also serve as a foil for the unnamed faithful woman who anointed Jesus before his death and receives the only praise in the entire Gospel of Mark (14:3–9). The story of the discovery of the empty tomb by the women integrates well with Mark's redactional themes and thus most likely stems from Mark himself. Perrin writes, "In the Gospel of Mark the discipleship failure is total. The disciples forsake Jesus as a group and flee from the arrest; Peter denies him with oaths while he is on trial; the women, who take on the role of the disciples in this final three-part narrative, fail to deliver the message entrusted to them."[23]

Lüdemann suggests that the presence of the young man at the tomb points to the recent invention of the empty tomb story in Mark:

> Given the identity of the expression "young man" and taking into account that this mysterious person appears in Mark's Gospel at decisive places and times, I venture the hypothesis that the young man in the tomb also represents the author of the Gospel. If that is correct, Mark speaks here as a preacher of the cross and resurrection of Jesus. By introducing himself into the tomb, he has further endorsed his own authority as an eyewitness. In pointing out that the women did not hand on the message of the resurrection to the disciples (v. 8), Mark implicitly identifies himself as the first one to tell the story of the empty tomb—*forty years* after the death of Jesus.[24]

The ending of Mark is indeed an endless source of fascination for scholars (Mark 16:8): "Then they went out and fled from the tomb, seized with trembling and bewilderment. They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

Some suggest that the silence of the women is intended by Mark to denote a "temporary" silence, by which it is meant that Mark believed the women did

tell others about the empty tomb later on Easter Sunday (as told in the other gospels). I consider this interpretation to be improbable for two reasons.

The first reason is that it does injustice to the fact that the author of Mark *ends the gospel* on this note. The gravity placed upon the fact that the author chose to end the gospel by saying this is hardly appreciated by the explanation that the silence was temporary. Indeed, this is hardly an explanation in the proper sense, as opposed to a mere possibility, because it does not help in any way to *explain* why the author of Mark ended by saying this. Even if the author of Mark may have thought the silence to be just temporary, why end the gospel this way? The suggestion that "the silence is temporary" has no explanatory power, if not negative explanatory power!

The second reason is that it is inconceivable for the author of Mark to have believed the silence to be "temporary" and not to have continued the narrative. We have the empirical evidence that at least three writers who knew the Gospel of Mark and who believed the silence was temporary could not resist the temptation to continue the narrative. The author of Matthew glosses over Mark's ending by writing, "Then they went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed, and ran to announce this to his disciples." For his part, Luke chooses to ignore Mark 16:8 almost completely. An anonymous scribe, who did not even have the intention of writing a new gospel but was supposed to be copying Mark, felt compelled to add an ending to Mark based on his knowledge of the later Gospel accounts (the longer ending in 16:9–20). The alternate, shorter ending may be one more example of the same phenomenon. It seems that someone who believes that the women went on to tell others the same day could not have failed to include some type of narrative after this point and could not have ended the story in this way.

I believe that the author of Mark must have understood the silence in a more permanent sense than would be allowed by Matthew or Luke. That is, Mark could not have meant that the women told other people the same day. Moreover, I do not think that the author could have meant that the women told the disciples any time before the disciples saw Jesus in Galilee. This is because, if the author believed that, then there is no reason for the author not to place such an episode conveniently on the same day, or at least in the narrative, as all other writers did. Again we have the problem that the author would not have ended his gospel this way unless he took the silence of the women to be more serious than a slight hesitation or delay, perhaps quickly

overcome by an appearance of Christ (so Matthew) before rushing onward to tell the disciples. One function of the silence, seeing as it comes immediately after verse 7 where the women are commanded to tell the disciples to go to Galilee, is to imply that the women did not tell the disciples to go to Galilee. The appearance of Christ to the disciples in Galilee represents the reconstitutive event (cf. Mark 14:28), not some exhortation from the silent women. Galilee is the place from which the mission will go forth. Thus, I do think that it is implied that the men made their way back to Galilee without any impetus from the women.

Several have suggested that the function of 16:8 is to present an explanation for why the story hadn't been heard previously. But I agree with Fuller here:

> The silence of the women can hardly be explained as the Evangelist's device to account for the recent origin of the story; that is altogether too modern and rationalistic an explanation, and assumes that the early church was concerned, like the modern historical critics, with conflicting historical evidence. The early church expanded its traditions anew in new situations: it did not investigate them historically to discover their origins and *Sitz im Leben*.[25]

But the question remains: If the women actually had run off to tell the men in Jerusalem, with Peter and the beloved disciple checking up, and with the discovery of the empty tomb becoming part of early Christian catechesis, then is it likely that the author of Mark would have ended the way that he did? For Mark to be able to end this way, for whatever reason he had, suggests that the story did not exist before the writing of Mark in the way that it had existed before the writing of Matthew and of Luke. For if it had, and if this were known long before Mark, it is not likely that the story would have ended with the women saying nothing to anyone. This is certainly *not* to say that the *intention* of the author was to explain why the story had not been heard before. The intention of the author could be a number of different possibilities. But if the story had been known far and wide, from the beginning of Christianity, ending with the women conveying their message, I would suggest that the author of Mark would not have received it in the form he tells. For that reason, the story is probably of recent origin in the Gospel of Mark.

IMPROBABILITIES IN MARK

I will start with those objections to the plausibility of the story that have little merit and proceed to those that are more serious. I am not declaring any one of these objections to be insuperable, but I do think that some provide a degree of evidence against the story.

It is sometimes said that the anointing of the body could have been performed by the women on the sabbath, and thus that they would not have needed to wait until Sunday. Craig writes in his essay:

> It is true that anointing could be done on the Sabbath, but this was only for a person lying on the death bed in his home, not for a body already wrapped and entombed in a sealed grave outside the city. Blinzler points out that, odd as it may seem, it would have been against the Jewish law even to carry the *aromata* to the grave site, for this was "work" (Jer. 17. 21–22; Shabbath 8.1)!

To which it may be added that the women may not have known the intricacies of rabbinic laws concerning the sabbath.

It is sometimes said that decomposition would have already begun in the Eastern climate. Craig writes in his essay:

> Actually, Jerusalem, being 700 metres above sea level, can be quite cool in April; interesting is the entirely incidental detail mentioned by John that at night in Jerusalem at that time it was cold, so much so that the servants and officers of the Jews had made a fire and were standing around it warming themselves (John 18.18). Add to this the facts that the body, interred Friday evening, had been in the tomb only a night, a day, and a night when the women came to anoint it early Sunday morning, that a rock-hewn tomb in a cliff side would stay naturally cool, and that the body may have already been packed around with aromatic spices, and one can see that the intention to anoint the body cannot in any way be ruled out.

Although the details mentioned in the gospels may not be correct, I don't believe that the weather on a particular weekend nearly two thousand years ago can be divined.

It is sometimes said that women would not have been permitted to

anoint the body of Jesus in Jewish society or that only men prepared the bodies of men. While it may be true that it was more common for men to prepare the bodies of other men for burial, there is no evidence that women would be prohibited from doing so, and indeed there exists a statement in a minor tractate of the Talmud to the contrary.[26]

It is sometimes said that the shroud could not be purchased on a holiday. Currently, I have no idea whether or not any business was done in Jerusalem on a holiday, so I can't evaluate this argument. It is also sometimes said that the burial could not be completed before sundown. This consideration tends to imply that Joseph of Arimathea must have gone to a bit of trouble or included his servants in the project, but this does not directly imply that the story is false.

Somewhat more troublesome is the statement that the women observed the tomb being covered by a stone, yet it was only while on the way there that they seemed to realize that nobody would be there to move the stone. Craig states in his essay:

> This same devotion could have induced them to go together to open the tomb, despite the stone. (That Mark only mentions the stone here does not mean they had not thought of it before; it serves a literary purpose here to prepare for v. 4). The opening of tombs to allow late visitors to view the body or to check against apparent death was Jewish practice, so the women's intention was not extraordinary.

Craig does not succeed in emptying this objection of all force. Certainly, nobody would state that tombs were never opened for visitors. Yet in allowing the likelihood that the women would have thought about the opening of the tomb before, Craig does not address the problem, if they had thought of this, why did they go to the tomb alone? It would seem more likely that they would have inquired at the house of Joseph for permission or assistance, or at least that they would have brought someone who would be able to help, rather than acting like the fools that Mark depicts. This tends to lower the likelihood of the story.

Richard Carrier describes what is most likely an anachronism in the story: "the tomb blocking stone is treated as round in the Gospels, but that would not have been the case in the time of Jesus, yet it was often the case after 70 CE, just when the gospels were being written."[27] It is most likely

that the author of Mark retrojected his knowledge of the tombs in his own day back into the time of Jesus.

Concerning the statement that the women "brought spices" on Sunday morning after observing the burial by Joseph of Arimathea, Hendrickx states that, "the embalming of a body was apparently not in accordance with contemporary custom, since there is not a single example available."[28] If what the women were supposed to be doing was not embalming, what was it? There was no such thing as a second anointing. The body was washed and anointed before being placed in the tomb or grave. Not only is this Jewish custom for burial, but it is also common sense that a body would be cleansed of sweat or blood before being wrapped in the cloth (usually white). Again, there is no example available for people going to a corpse after it was buried, removing the shroud, and anointing the corpse for a second time since the body would have been already washed or anointed before. This would make absolutely no sense; it would not occur to anyone, especially not in a Jewish culture, to anoint the body after it had been buried properly. Craig states in his essay, "what the women were probably doing is precisely that described in the Mishnah, namely the use of aromatic oils and perfumes that could be rubbed on or simply poured over the body." However, this obscures the fact that this was done *prior to burial*. Hans von Campenhausen writes, "The desire to anoint, 'on the third day,' a dead body already buried and wrapped in linen cloths, is, however it be explained, not in accordance with any custom known to us."[29] It comes as little surprise then that Matthew and John, who are usually thought to have more knowledge of things Jewish, do not state that the women came to anoint the body on Sunday morning.

The tomb burial of Jesus by Joseph of Arimathea is unlikely. It is difficult to account for his motivation: there are difficulties with the theory that Joseph was merely a pious Jew as well as with the theory that Joseph was a secret disciple of Jesus. These difficulties disappear if there were no tomb burial by Joseph.

Raymond E. Brown suggests that Joseph was merely a "pious Sanhedrinist" who desired to see God's law be carried out with respect to burial before sunset.[30] This thesis is not without its difficulties. For example, in Mark, Joseph requests the body of Jesus specifically and disregards the other two crucified. The pious Jew presumably would have wanted to take care of all three; alternatively, if it is supposed that the thieves would have been

buried by the Romans anyway, then there is no reason for the pious Jew to get involved at all. Brown suggests, "We have to assume that the story in the Synoptics has been narrowed down in its focus to Jesus, ignoring the two others who were no longer theologically or dramatically important."[31] This is not entirely unreasonable, although it would be another mark against the reliability of Mark, who does seem to assume that no other bodies were placed in the tomb with Jesus. But is it very likely that a pious Sanhedrinist would be rushing about on the day before the sabbath during the Passover to have the bodies of the crucified properly buried? Pilate was perfectly capable of performing the burial with his own means, and thus there would be no offense to the law of God. Indeed, the Romans were in an easier position to perform the burial, since they would not have acquired ritual impurity thereby. Moreover, a historical Joseph would probably have had better things to do at this time than to greatly inconvenience himself for those who could only be commonly perceived as crucified scum, the Galilean just as much as the highwaymen.[32] Not only would it require his incurring ritual impurity or else the summoning of his servants to the cross, as well as the expense of the linen and anointing oil, but most of all (if we follow the later Gospels) it would require the use of his own nearby rock-hewn tomb (which just happens to have nobody buried there yet). Tombs at that time were undoubtedly expensive to build or to quarry, and for this reason tombs were jealously preserved within families over several generations. The only motivation for a pious Jew to undertake a tomb burial for the man would be a strong belief that the crucified deserved an honorable burial. However, this would require that Joseph considered the charge against Jesus to be unjust in the sight of God. Not only is it difficult to understand why a simple, pious Sanhedrinist would be moved to conclude that such a one had been crucified unjustly, but it is hardly plausible that Pilate would have allowed Jesus to be given an honorable burial, as this would be tantamount to an admission that Jesus was crucified without just cause.

It is not without reason, therefore, that Craig suggests that Joseph was indeed a secret admirer of Jesus: "his daring to ask Pilate for a request lacking legal foundation, his proper burial of Jesus' body alone, and his laying the body in his own, expensive tomb are acts that go beyond the duties of a merely pious Jew."[33] Against such a view, Brown writes,

> No canonical Gospel shows cooperation between Joseph and the women followers of Jesus who are portrayed as present at the burial, observing where Jesus was put (Mark 15:47 and par.). Lack of cooperation in burial between the two groups of Jesus' disciples is not readily intelligible, especially when haste was needed. Why did the women not help Joseph if he was a fellow disciple, instead of planning to come back after the Sabbath when he would not be there?[34]

Again we might wonder what could have motivated the Sanhedrinist to an admiration for this particular crucified Galilean, especially if there were any historical reality to the actions of Jesus against the Temple. (An original tradition that Jesus was buried by hostile figures (see below) would count against the notion of Joseph being a disciple.) Moreover, the tendency is toward making Joseph appear more like a disciple and thus suggests that the historical reality was nothing of the sort. As Brown says of those who take Mark as meaning that Joseph was a devotee of Jesus, "If that was what Mark meant, why did he take such an indirect and obscure way of saying so?"[35] Brown shows the figure of Joseph as it moves from Mark, to the later evangelists, to the Gospel of Peter, to the Gospel of Nicodemus, and eventually into the Glastonbury legend to exhibit an increasing sense that Joseph was a model disciple of Jesus.[36] Craig has added his own speculation to the mix of legend concerning Joseph with his suggestion that Joseph was a delegate of the Sanhedrin and a secret disciple who was commissioned to dispose of all three bodies in a criminal's grave yet who nevertheless tricked both Pilate and the Sanhedrin by giving a proper burial for the Lord in his own nearby tomb.[37] Craig had already noted considerations against the idea that Joseph was acting as anything other than a private citizen:

> None of the gospels suggest that Joseph was acting as a delegate of the Sanhedrin; there was nothing in the law that required that the bodies be buried immediately, and the Jews may have been content to leave that to the Romans. That Joseph *dared* to go to Pilate and ask *specifically* for Jesus' body is difficult to understand if he was simply an emissary of the Sanhedrin, assigned to dispose of the bodies.[38]

It is for these reasons that Craig seems to prefer the suggestion that the Romans disposed of the thieves while Joseph took the body of Jesus. How-

ever, Jesus is the least likely of the three for Pilate to release, for not only might it suggest that the crucifixion was unjust but it also would lend justification to whatever sedition that Pilate suspected and would honor one who had been condemned as a threat to order.

There is a final reason to think that Pilate would most likely have ensured that Jesus did not receive an honorable tomb burial. Raymond Brown notes, "There was in this period an increasing Jewish veneration of the tombs of the martyrs and prophets."[39] Craig agrees, stating, "During Jesus' time there was an extraordinary interest in the graves of Jewish martyrs and holy men and these were scrupulously cared for and honored."[40] If Pilate considered Jesus to be an enemy of the state, how much more would Pilate have to fear not only making him a martyr but also establishing a shrine to Jesus right in Jerusalem? It was in Pilate's best interest to make certain that Jesus would have been buried without honor and in obscurity.

BURIAL TRADITIONS

There are traditions concerning the burial and appearances of Jesus that provide evidence against the story of the discovery of an empty tomb.

The *Secret Book of James* is thought to have been written in the first half of the second century. This is mainly because the sayings of Jesus are thought to be dependent on oral tradition and not the canonical gospels, which is not likely after the mid-second century.[41] It is known from a copy in Coptic found at Nag Hammadi. The setting of the work is a postresurrection encounter with the risen Lord. The summary description of the hardships undergone by Jesus includes that Jesus was buried "in the sand."[42] This Coptic phrase is sometimes translated nonliterally to mean "shamefully," but it should be made clear that the very reason why the burial is shameful is that it is a burial in the sand. To be wrapped in a new linen cloth and placed in a rock-hewn tomb is not the description of a shameful burial. Thus, the *Secret Book of James* reflects a tradition that Jesus was buried in the sand or, to speak generally, in a dishonorable makeshift shallow grave instead of in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

It is plausible that Mark unwittingly retained a pericope that was formed by Christians who did not believe Jesus was given proper tomb burial

by Joseph of Arimathea. The Parable of the Tenants is interpreted as referring to Jesus. In Mark 12:8, it is said, "So they seized him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard." This most likely reflects an early tradition that those who arranged the execution of Jesus also arranged his shameful burial.

While arguing that Mark did not portray Joseph as a disciple of Jesus in any way, Raymond Brown notes the following passages where the phrasing suggests that Jesus was buried by Jews who had condemned Jesus, not by his disciples:

> A sermon in Acts 13:27–29 reports: "Those who lived in Jerusalem and their rulers . . . requested Pilate to have him killed; and when they had fulfilled all that was written of him *they* took him down from the tree and placed him in a tomb." John 19:31 tells us that *the Jews* asked Pilate that the legs of the crucified be broken and they be taken away. A variant reading at the end of John 19:38 continues the story: "So *they* came and took away his body." Similarly in *Gpet* [Gospel of Peter] 6:21 we read, "And then they [the Jews] drew out the nails from the hands of the Lord and placed him on the earth." Justin (*Dialogue* 97.1) phrases the burial thus: "For the Lord too remained on the tree almost until evening [*hespera*], and towards evening *they* buried him"—in a chapter where the context suggests that "they" may be the Jewish opponents of Jesus rather than his disciples. [43]

Brown suggests, "The plural may be simply a generalization of the memory of Joseph who was one of 'the Jews,' i.e., not a disciple of Jesus at this time but a pious Sanhedrinist responsible for sentencing Jesus and acting in fidelity to the deuteronomic law of burying before sunset those hanged (crucified) on a tree."[44] However, having seen the difficulties with such a view previously, the consistent plural may be recognized as a tradition that the enemies of Jesus did indeed bury him. A request from some Jews for the bodies of the crucified to be taken down before the Sabbath may be historical, as this is plausible and even to be expected. These Jews would probably expect the crucified to deserve no better than a common criminal's grave. In this way, the burial of Jesus would be remembered as a burial by his enemies, originally, some Jews and the Romans acting in complicity, yet which over time would come to mean the Jews alone (for reasons which will not be explored here).

Thus there was probably a tradition that some Jews, enemies of Jesus, requested the body of Jesus to be taken down for burial. There is a tradition in the *Secret Book of James* that the body of Jesus was, shamefully, buried in the sand. There is a tradition in the Gospel of Peter that the body of Jesus was taken down by the Jews.[45] Finally, there is a tradition in the Epistula Apostolorum that the body of Jesus was taken down from the cross along with the two thieves.[46] Even if these documents might be harmonized with the Gospel of Mark using a little ingenuity, that does not negate the possibility, indeed the likelihood, that they contain the vestiges of a different tradition or traditions.

So the evidence would indicate that the story of the tomb burial by Joseph of Arimathea was not seared onto Christian consciousness as an indisputable historical fact. But can we say that these other traditions are likely to be pre-Markan? There is reason to think so. After all, there is little cause for Christians to imagine that Jesus was buried shamefully when in fact he was properly interred in the rock-hewn tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. On the face of it, it is more likely that the tradition would develop in the direction of providing Jesus a more hospitable burial. Thus it is likely that the earlier tradition was that Jesus was buried in a shameful manner, what Reginald Fuller describes as "the final insult done to him by his enemies."[47] In the words of J. D. Crossan:

> It is most probable that Jesus was buried by the same inimical forces that had crucified him and that on Easter Sunday Morning those who knew the site did not care and those who cared did not know the site. The major reason for this conclusion is that the tradition has protested too much: an indifferent burial by Roman soldiers becomes eventually a regal entombment by his faithful followers (cf. John 19:31–32 and 38–41).[48]

APPEARANCE TRADITIONS

The first appearances were to Peter and his associates. The first appearance recounted in the formula found in 1 Corinthians 15 is the one to Kephas. This is widely acknowledged to be the earliest and best evidence that is available. The Gospel of Mark, the oldest of the four, alludes to the appearance to "the disciples and Peter" in Mark 16:7.[49] This is the only appearance men-

tioned in Mark, and it is fairly safe to assume that it is understood to be the first one. After telling the Emmaus story, Luke mentions an appearance to Simon in Luke 24:34. The author seems to mention the appearance to Simon so as to avoid contradicting the tradition that Peter was the first to receive an appearance. The testimony of Paul, confirmed by Mark and/or Luke, shows that Peter was the first remembered for an appearance, and an appearance to Peter's circle follows closely thereafter. A weak indication is found in Ignatius, who mentions only the name of Peter when he describes an appearance of Christ.[50] The primacy of the appearance to Peter may also be reflected in the "Thou art Peter" saying in Matthew 16:17–19.[51] Finally, it will be argued that John 21 provides a strong confirmation.

The strongest competitor to Peter for the distinction of first appearance is Mary Magdalene. That is not saying much, however, for the evidence is of a much later and weaker variety. It has already been argued that the appearance to the women is probably not a historical tradition. The Gospel of Matthew's account of the appearance to the women in Matthew 28:9–10 is the first one available, but it has every sign of being redactional.[52] The only Gospel to recount a unique appearance to Mary Magdalene is the Gospel of John, but this is probably not a historical account and appears to be a development of Matthew's story.[53] It might also be suggested that John included a nod to the earlier tradition that Peter, not Mary Magdalene, was the first to come to faith in the resurrection, while at the same time playing up the role of the beloved disciple with the race to the tomb. Strikingly, we hear nothing from Mark or Luke about an appearance of Christ to the women, which is difficult to understand if it were a historical tradition. It is somewhat understandable that the women would be omitted from the list in Paul's letter because they received no respect as witnesses. But Mark and Luke are already telling us about the women and their role, so there is no need to be coy about the appearance of Christ to them. Indeed, a straightforward reading of their narratives excludes such a thing.[54] The story about the women seems to develop from an angelophany to a Christophany. In the Gospel of Mark, there is only an angelophany. In the Gospel of Matthew, there is an angelophany followed up by a two verse appearance of Christ to ensure that the women proceed at a brisk pace. In the Gospel of John, a mere two verses have been assigned to the angels, who recede into the background while the appearance of Christ takes center stage. In the Epistula Apostolorum, the angels have

been dropped entirely, and now there is only the appearance of Christ.[55] The fact that the appearance of Christ eventually supplants the angelophany suggests that there was no original tradition of an appearance of Christ to the women. Indeed, the simple fact that Mark recounts an angelophany instead of a Christophany suggests that Mark did not know of an appearance to the women and was remaining faithful to the early tradition that the first appearance was to "the disciples and Peter."

So, the first appearances were to Peter and company. What indications do we have to place these appearances geographically?

Paul does not offer any clear reference to where he believed the appearances were situated. There may be a hint, however. Hans von Campenhausen argues:

> The appearance . . . to five hundred brethren (and sisters?) can hardly be situated in Jerusalem; it, therefore, points likewise to Galilee. Even if the round number 'five hundred' may be an exaggeration, the gathering would be too numerous for a private house, and a synagogue—even were it large enough—would hardly have been accorded to the adherents of Jesus in Jerusalem. We cannot consider an open-air service on the Mount of Olives. That only leaves the temple to be considered. But quite apart from the intrinsic improbability of an appearance there and the impossibility of keeping away the unbelievers then as always, such an extraordinary occurrence would never have passed without trace into oblivion, and Luke certainly, with his love for the temple, would have attached great importance to it and gladly recorded it. Thus there only remains for this appearance a gathering somewhere in Galilee, and, as regards external circumstances, this is least improbable.[56]

Interestingly, Luke mentions the appearance to Peter in passing without giving any description of details or location. This is likely to be deliberate, for if the only tradition available to Luke was that the appearance to Peter took place in Galilee, then Luke would be required to skip the details because of his exclusive emphasis on Jerusalem. Hans von Campenhausen again:

> On returning to the city with the great news, they were received with the jubilant cry, "The Lord has risen in truth and appeared to Simon." What is so striking is how the report of what is, after all, the main thing, is telescoped, announcing but not describing it; and this has long aroused the suspicion that Luke must have had definite grounds for avoiding any

> description of the appearance to Peter. Perhaps, in its special features, it could not be ascribed elsewhere than to Galilee, and so it contradicted the Jerusalem tendency of his narration. However, he could not simply omit it, since it was crucial and formed part of the most ancient tradition. It was, therefore, simply indicated, and all the detailed circumstances and the precise place of the meeting were, strangely enough, left vague.[57]

Along with Paul, however, the author of Luke does not provide a clear reference, only a suggestive possibility.

However, the earliest evangelist, Mark, clearly tells us that the appearance to "the disciples and Peter" took place in Galilee (cf. Mark 16:7). This indication alone should carry great weight, for it appears that the author has taken some pains to conjoin the empty tomb story (in Jerusalem) to the tradition of appearances in Galilee. Appearances in Jerusalem would fit much more smoothly with the empty tomb story, but Mark manages to link the empty tomb story with the tradition of appearances in Galilee only through the angel's message.[58] Matthew also seems to know only traditions of Galilean appearances to the disciples, given that 28:9–10 is most likely redactional but in any case does not feature the disciples.

D. H. van Daalen writes of the Johannine appendix:

> It has often been pointed out that the reference to the appearance by the lakeside as the third appearance is rather odd (21:14). It is not true that chapter 20 already has three, because the appearance to Mary Magdalene was not one to the disciples. But the verse seems pointless unless there were some who did not regard this as the third appearance. The note of verse 14 is clearly meant to link this story, traditionally not regarded as the third appearance, to the two already described in chapter 20. But it seems highly unlikely that the tradition would count the Lord's appearances as no. 1, no. 2, no. 3, and so on. The only one that would be remembered with a figure attached would be the first. It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that the Evangelist received this story as the Lord's first appearance.
>
> The contents of the story confirm that. If one reads John 21:2–13 by itself there is nothing to suggest that Jesus was known to have been raised from the dead and had already appeared to his disciples.[59]

Indeed, the story in John 21 does give the impression of being a first encounter. The disciples had returned to their old occupation of fishing in

Galilee. And as van Daalen also notes, "The conversation between Jesus and Peter (21:15–19) also is much easier to understand if we assume that the risen Lord had not appeared to Peter before."[60] In the story, Simon is mentioned first and plays the most prominent role; indeed, Peter is the only one who acts individually, apart from a brief statement from the beloved disciple in verse 7. This, then, confirms the tradition of a first appearance to Peter and his group in the land of Galilee.

The Gospel of Peter begins to tell a story similar to the one in the Gospel of John, and it may be based on a common tradition written before them both. In the Gospel of Peter, as in the Gospel of Mark, the women flee in fear without saying anything to the disciples. The ending of Peter reads (v. 58–60):

> Now it was the last day of unleavened bread and many went away and repaired to their homes, since the feast was at an end. But we, the twelve disciples of the Lord, wept and mourned, and each one, very grieved for what had come to pass, went to his own home. But I, Simon Peter, and my brother Andrew took our nets and went to the sea. And there was with us Levi, the son of Alphaeus, whom the Lord . . .

There it breaks off. It is interesting that the Gospel of Peter, which includes the visit of the women to the tomb, implies that the disciples returned home after the Passover feast of their own accord. The tradition that the disciples repaired to their own homes finds another echo in John 16:32, "But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone." The author of John in 20:10 seems to have the impression that their home was in Jerusalem, which is anachronistic unless the disciples had already purchased property there.

However, just as the Gospel of Peter notes, a group of disciples most likely remained with Peter in Galilee, living together and fishing together. Charles Guignebert writes:

> It would be difficult to comprehend how the hopes and confidence of these poor men could have been reborn if at least some of them had not remained together, strengthened by the fellowship of their daily life, comforting one another and compounding their optimistic reactions. I do not think it daring to draw from the few wretched indices we still possess the conclusion that the center and life of this little group was Simon Peter.[61]

Note that it is not necessary to postulate a sudden and immediate packing of the bags on Good Friday in order to hold that the first appearances were to the disciples and Peter in Galilee. As van Daalen writes, "And, of course, they had every reason to stay till the end of the festival. No matter whether they were in a festive mood, it would have been extremely imprudent to draw attention to themselves by leaving the city while nobody else did. There is no better hiding-place than a crowd."[62] Note also that fleeing would entail traveling on the Sabbath. Besides which, if men then were anything like men today, they would be loathe to let the room which they had paid up for a week go to waste. Yet though they may have remained in Jerusalem for Passover, the first appearances could well have taken place in Galilee.

So the best evidence available indicates that the first appearances were to the disciples and Peter after they had returned to Galilee. D. H. van Daalen notes this without drawing any conclusions:

> If this story, before it was added to the Fourth Gospel, circulated as an independent part of the tradition, and was told as a first appearance of the risen Lord, we have an answer to some awkward questions. The most obvious is, what were the disciples doing fishing in Galilee, if the Lord had already appeared to them in Jerusalem and sent them to proclaim the Gospel (John 20:21–23)? The answer now becomes obvious: in the story as it was originally told they had not seen the risen Lord in Jerusalem.[63]

And this consideration weighs against the empty tomb story.

The tendency of the tradition is to displace appearances in Galilee for Jerusalem. In the Gospel of Mark, there are no appearances in Jerusalem, only an angelophany. The only appearances anticipated are in Galilee. In the Gospel of Matthew, however, we find that the women have been given an appearance in the area of Jerusalem. But it has been argued that this is redactional. What could provide the earliest tradition of an appearance in Jerusalem turns out to be, rather, a Matthean device that must be used because of the awkward conjunction of the discovery of the empty tomb by the women and the appearance to the disciples in Galilee. The evangelists Luke and John (up to chapter 20) smooth out their story by telling only of Jerusalem appearances. This indicates that the Jerusalem-appearance stories follow on the heels of the empty-tomb story, and thus that the empty-tomb story is a relatively recent development in the Gospel of Mark, because

Mark himself retained the older tradition of appearances to the disciples and Peter in Galilee.

Furthermore, it is difficult to understand what the disciples were doing fishing in Galilee at all. It seems improbable that the disciples were set to wondering with the discovery of the empty tomb yet that the first appearances were in Galilee. For one thing, the empty tomb should have figured more in the kerygma. As Craig would argue, if the women discovered the empty tomb while the disciples were still in Jerusalem, it just makes good sense that the disciples would also visit the empty tomb. But then the empty tomb would have the witness of the male disciples, and thus the most commonly advanced excuse for the lack of attention to the empty tomb in the kerygma, that it was only found by the women, is not cogent. And the discovery of the empty tomb by the men would be likely to be mentioned by Mark and Matthew, if it were indeed a historical happening.

Finally, it makes little sense for the disciples to leave Jerusalem at all after the discovery of the empty tomb. In Craig's reconstruction, the disciples stayed in Jerusalem for a week, after which the Lord instructed them to meet up with him again in Galilee before the final ascension on the fortieth day in Jerusalem once again.[64] I have a vague sense of implausibility here, which the reader may accept or reject for what it is worth, against the idea that the eternal Creator of the universe would suggest a temporary rendezvous in Galilee. In any case, I think that the evidence favors the theory that the first appearance was in Galilee. The problem that this causes is exhibited by the reconstruction made by Hans von Campenhausen, in which the belief in the resurrection with the discovery of the empty tomb motivates the disciples to go to Galilee, and then the belief in the resurrection with the appearances of Christ motivates the disciples to go back to Jerusalem.[65] If the belief in the resurrection motivated the disciples to go to Galilee, why would the confirmation of that belief motivate them once again to go back to Jerusalem? It makes more sense to posit that the belief in the resurrection was born in Galilee and that the disciples subsequently decided to return to Jerusalem.[66]

ONE LAST ARGUMENT

An argument from silence is sometimes invoked by those who support the historicity of the empty tomb. James D. G. Dunn makes this argument:

> Christians today of course regard the site of Jesus' tomb with similar veneration, and that practice goes back at least to the fourth century. But for the period covered by the New Testament and other earliest Christian writings there is no evidence whatsoever for Christians regarding the place where Jesus had been buried as having any special significance. *No* practice of tomb veneration, or even of meeting for worship at Jesus' tomb is attested for the first Christians. Had such been the practice of the first Christians, with all the significance which the very practice itself presupposes, it is hard to believe that our records of Jerusalem Christianity and of Christian visits thereto would not have mentioned or alluded to it in some way or at some point.[67]

I agree with Dunn up to this point but cannot agree with his conclusion, "The tomb was not venerated, it did not become a place of pilgrimage, because the tomb was empty!"[68] This conclusion is highly illogical. I agree that it would be most reasonable to conclude that early Christians did not know that Jesus was resting in his tomb because we would then expect tomb veneration. I agree that this is evidence against knowledge of an occupied tomb. But I would state further that this is equally evidence against knowledge of an empty tomb. It is plain to see that the site of the tomb of Jesus would become a site of veneration and pilgrimage among early Christians regardless of whether it were occupied or empty. The factors of nagging doubt, pious curiosity, and liturgical significance would all contribute toward the empty tomb becoming a site of intense interest among Christians. Contrary to Dunn, and in agreement with Peter Carnley, the obvious explanation is that early Christians had no idea where Jesus was buried.[69]

Like Dunn, Craig also accepts the "fact that Jesus' tomb was not venerated as a shrine" as an indication in favor of the empty tomb.[70] Again, however, if it is granted that there was no tomb veneration among early Christians, the natural conclusion is that early Christians did not know where the tomb of Jesus was. This argument is effective not only against an occupied tomb theory but also against an empty tomb theory. As Craig states, "Indeed, is it too much to imagine that during his two week stay Paul would want to visit the place where the Lord lay? Ordinary human feelings would suggest such a thing."[71] Indeed, is it too much to imagine that other early Christians would have the same ordinary human feelings as Paul would? Raymond Brown states, "A particular reason for remembering the tomb of Jesus would

lie in the Christian faith that the tomb had been evacuated by his resurrection from the dead."[72] Thus, it is extremely likely that an empty tomb would become a site of veneration from the very start of Christianity. For this reason, the fact that there was no tomb veneration indicates that the early Christians did not know the location of the tomb of Jesus, neither of an empty tomb nor of an occupied tomb. The best way to avoid this conclusion is, I think, to assert that there was tomb veneration despite the silence of any first-, second-, or third-century writers on such an interest. However, as Dunn and Craig would agree, this is unlikely. So this consideration provides evidence against the empty tomb story.

CONCLUSION

How do these arguments relate to the resurrection of Jesus? The relationship is asymmetrical. If there were an empty tomb, there needn't have been a resurrection; an alternative explanation, such as the relocation hypothesis, will serve us well.[73] But if there were no empty tomb, then there was no bodily resurrection. If these arguments succeed in making a convincing case that the empty tomb story is a fiction, then the story of the bodily resurrection of Jesus is a fiction as well.

But what if these arguments do not succeed? What if the evidence against the empty tomb is deemed to be no stronger than those arguments that may be adduced in its favor? Nevertheless, the very ambiguity of the evidence concerning the empty tomb may be taken as evidence against the idea that God raised Jesus from the dead. Surely God could have made sure that the evidence was unilaterally in favor of the empty tomb; moreover, given the importance of the event, it is hard to imagine that God should not have done so. So even if the evidence concerning the empty tomb of Jesus is uncertain, that very uncertainty discredits the idea of a miraculous resurrection.

NOTES

1. A very abbreviated list of twentieth-century writers on the NT who do not believe that the empty tomb story is historically reliable: Marcus Borg, Günther Bornkamm, Gerald Boldock Bostock, Rudolf Bultmann, Peter Carnley, John Dominic Crossan, Stevan Davies,

Maurice Goguel, Michael Goulder, Hans Grass, Charles Guignebert, Uta Ranke-Heinemann, Randel Helms, Herman Hendrickx, Roy Hoover, Helmut Koester, Hans Küng, Alfred Loisy, Burton L. Mack, Willi Marxsen, Gerd Lüdemann, Norman Perrin, Robert M. Price, Marianne Sawicki, John Shelby Spong, Howard M. Teeple, and John T. Theodore.

2. This possibility is highlighted by several ancient references. See Gerard Stephen Sloyan, *The Crucifixion of Jesus: History, Myth, Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 16. Also see Raymond Edward Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave; A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), pp. 1207–1208.

3. Marianne Sawicki, *Seeing the Lord: Resurrection and Early Christian Practices* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), p. 257.

4. For this possibility, see the procedure as described in Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 6:5.

5. For example, Norman Perrin, *The Resurrection According to Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 80. Also Uta Ranke-Heinemann, *Putting Away Childish Things: The Virgin Birth, the Empty Tomb, and Other Fairy Tales You Don't Need to Believe to Have a Living Faith* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994), p. 131.

6. Reginald H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 75.

7. Herman Hendrickx, *The Resurrection Narratives of the Synoptic Gospels* (London: G. Chapman, 1984), p. 31.

8. Ibid., p. 36.

9. Perrin, ibid., p. 60.

10. Ibid., p. 69.

11. Hendrickx, ibid., pp. 39–46.

12. Ibid., p. 46.

13. The idea that the gospels shaped and created oral tradition is not a new one. Raymond Brown, for example, believes that the Gospel of Peter's numerous points of contact with the canonical gospels can be explained entirely from oral tradition emanating from these gospels. So one must not rule out the possibility that the synoptics have indirectly influenced some of the material found in John. As John P. Meier comments in another context in *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), p. 131: ". . . our canonical Gospels not only come from ongoing oral tradition, but also generate ongoing oral tradition. It is also affirmed, quite rightly, that oral traditions did not die out the day after a canonical Gospel was published. But the writing of the canonical Gospels did change the situation. The canonical Gospels—long before they were definitively recognized as 'canonical'—were regularly preached on at worship, studied in catechesal schools, and cited strictly and loosely by patristic authors; and so increasingly they lodged themselves in the memory of individual Christians and whole communities. Inevitably they 'contaminated' and modified the oral tradition that existed before and alongside themselves."

14. Edward Lynn Bode, *The First Easter Morning: The Gospel Accounts of the Women's Visit to the Tomb of Jesus* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), pp. 82–83.

15. Fuller, ibid., p. 135.

16. D. Moody Smith, *John Among the Gospels: The Relationship in Twentieth-Century Research* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), pp. 85–103.

17. Bode, ibid., p. 5.

18. Rev. John T. Theodore, *Who Was Jesus? A Historical Analysis of the Misinterpretations of His Life and Teachings* (New York: Exposition Press, 1961), p. 189.

19. James D. G. Dunn, *The Evidence for Jesus: The Impact of Scholarship on Our Understanding of How Christianity Began* (London: SCM, 1985), p. 66.

20. Peter Carnley, *The Structure of Resurrection Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 47.

21. In Paul Copan and Ronald K. Tacelli, ed., *Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Figment?; A Debate Between William Lane Craig & Gerd Lüdemann* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 133.

22. Richard C. Carrier, private correspondence.

23. Perrin, ibid., p. 28.

24. In Copan and Tacelli, ibid., p. 154.

25. Fuller, ibid., pp. 52–53.

26. Dov Zlotnick, trans., with intro. and notes, *The Tractate "Mourning" (Semahot) (Regulations Relating to Death, Burial, and Mourning).* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 82.

27. Richard C. Carrier, "Craig's Empty Tomb and Habermas on the Post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus," *Secular Web*, 1999, http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/richard_carrier/indef/ 4e.html. See also the article by Amos Kloner, "Did a Rolling Stone Close Jesus' Tomb?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 25, no. 5 (September/October 1999): 22–29, 76. Previously available online at http://www.bib-arch.org/barso99/barso99roll1.html (page now discontinued).

28. Hendrickx, ibid., p. 44.

29. Hans von Campenhausen, *Tradition and Life in the Church; Essays and Lectures in Church History*, trans. A. V. Littledale (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 58.

30. Brown, ibid., p. 1218.

31. Ibid., p. 1216.

32. It is not exactly clear what the charge was against the *lestai*; they are described as thieves, highwaymen, or sometimes revolutionaries. In any case, the man crucified betwixt the two was not likely to receive better treatment and perhaps even less likely. Among other reasons, there was the snobbery of people in Jerusalem against Galileans. There were some who thought that no good could come from Galilee, cf. John 1:46, John 8:52. But, most importantly, it would be assumed that someone who was crucified most likely deserved it unless there was some compelling reason to think otherwise. I find it hard to see how someone on the Sanhedrin would have been compelled to think otherwise of one who, if the gospel record is to be trusted here, opposed the Temple and was declared "King of the Jews."

33. Craig, ibid., p. 176.

34. Brown, ibid., p. 1218.

35. Ibid., p. 1215.

36. Ibid., pp. 1232–34.

37. Craig, ibid., p. 176.

38. Ibid., p. 175.

39. Brown, ibid., p. 1280.

40. Craig, ibid., p. 356.

41. Ron Cameron, ed., *The Other Gospels: Non-Canonical Gospel Texts* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), p. 56.

42. *The Secret Book of James* 5.

43. Brown, ibid., p. 1219.

44. Ibid.

45. *Gospel of Peter* 6.21.

46. *Epistula Apostolorum* 9.

47. Fuller, ibid., p. 54.

48. Werner H. Kelber, ed., *The Passion in Mark: Studies on Mark 14–16* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. 152.

49. Fuller (ibid., pp. 63–64) argues against the interpretation that the disciples are to expect not an appearance but rather the coming parousia. He gives a few reasons, including that Peter was named in particular: "But the decisive argument which proves it to be, in Mark 16:7, a resurrection rather than a parousia reference is the naming of Peter as well as the disciples, a circumstance which indicates clearly that the Evangelist is alluding to the two appearances listed in 1 Corinthians 15:5. If Mark 16:7 were pointing forward to the parousia it is hard to see why Peter should be singled out for special mention. But if it points to resurrection appearances, the reason for the mention of Peter is obvious."

50. *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*, ch. 3.

51. Fuller, ibid., p. 166: "We have already agreed that this saying was circulated originally as a saying of the Risen One . . . The 'Thou art Peter' saying is thus a verbalization of the primary appearance to Peter."

52. Hendrickx, ibid., pp. 34–38. See also Bode, ibid., pp. 54–56. Bode adds these arguments against the historicity of an appearance to the women (p. 56): "It seems that other arguments, together with that of the repetition of the angel's command, rule against a historical appearance of Jesus at the tomb. First, such an appearance would seem to nullify any utility in the message of the angel—if Jesus was to repeat the message, why bother with the angel? Second, it would seem strange that the first appearance would be to the women rather than to the official witnesses. Third, of what value would the appearance to the women be, whose report would have been suspect? One cannot think that the purpose of the appearance was to assure the women themselves, as they are already reported to be going with joy to carry out quickly the task assigned to them. Thus we see and understand the appearance in 28:9–10 as a doublet for the previous command by the angel of the Lord. After all, from the angel of Yahweh speaking in the first person for the Lord it is not far to an appearance of the risen Lord of the Christians."

53. Bode, ibid., pp. 82–84.

54. It is unlikely that these writers knew of an appearance of Christ to the women given

the explicit silence left unbroken in Mark and the uninterrupted return of the women in Luke 24:8–9.

55. *Epistula Apostolorum*, 9b–10.

56. Von Campenhausen, ibid., pp. 48–49.

57. Ibid., pp. 49–50.

58. Fuller, ibid., p. 69: "But for the strength of it [the Galilean appearance tradition], Mark might very well have transferred the appearance to Jerusalem, since that is what the exigencies of the empty tomb story would naturally require. Instead, he contents himself with a slight adjustment of the earlier tradition, according to which the disciples fled at the arrest to Galilee (14:27,50, see above, ch. 1). The disciples now wait in Jerusalem to receive the angel's message from the women. In doing so, Mark re-motivates the journey of the disciples to Galilee. It is no longer a flight, but an orderly journey to see the Lord at his express pre-resurrection command (14:28) reiterated by the angel at the tomb (16:7). Mark's procedure in joining the empty tomb narrative to Galilean appearances shows how strong for him the Galilee tradition was. So we can with full confidence, despite recent arguments of W. Marxsen, follow Grass in supplementing 1 Corinthians 15 by Mark's information to the extent of locating the two primary appearances in Galilee."

59. Van Daalen, ibid., pp. 32–33.

60. Ibid., p. 33.

61. Charles Guignebert, *The Christ*, trans. Peter Ouzts and Phylis Cooperman, ed. and rev. Sonia Volochova (New Hyde Park: University Books, 1968), p. 59.

62. Van Daalen, ibid., p. 39.

63. Ibid., p. 33.

64. Craig, ibid., p. 307.

65. Von Campenhausen, ibid., pp. 85–86.

66. Charles Guignebert explains the movement to Jerusalem in terms of "the conviction that the imminent manifestation of the Kingdom would take place in Jerusalem and that the Messiah would come forward there" (ibid., p. 59).

67. James D. G. Dunn, *The Evidence for Jesus: The Impact of Scholarship on our Understanding of How Christianity Began* (London: SCM, 1985), pp. 67–68.

68. Dunn, ibid., p. 68.

69. Peter Carnley, *The Structure of Resurrection Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 58.

70. William Lane Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus* (Lewiston: Edward Mellen Press, 1989), p. 372.

71. William Lane Craig, "The Historicity of the Empty Tomb of Jesus." *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985): 39–67.

72. Raymond Edward Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave; A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), p. 1281.

73. Cf. Richard Carrier's chapter, "The Burial of Jesus in Light of Jewish Law;" and Jeffery Jay Lowder's chapter, "Historical Evidence and the Empty Tomb Story: A Reply to William Lane Craig."

7

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE AND THE EMPTY TOMB STORY:

A REPLY TO WILLIAM LANE CRAIG[1]

JEFFERY JAY LOWDER

Anyone familiar with apologetic arguments for the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus knows that they often place great emphasis on establishing the historicity of the empty tomb. Although countless Christians have defended the historicity of the empty tomb, William Lane Craig is widely regarded as its foremost contemporary defender.[2] Yet, to the best of my knowledge, no one has ever directly responded to all of Craig's specific arguments for the historicity of the empty tomb story.[3] The purpose of this paper is to provide such a response. While I tentatively agree with Craig that Joseph of Arimathea placed Jesus' body in a tomb that later became empty, I shall argue that Craig has not shown that the resurrection is the best explanation for that emptiness. And, though I shall not argue the story is false, I shall argue that even if the story is historical, its historicity is not established on the basis of any of Craig's arguments as they stand.

1. CRAIG'S ARGUMENTS FOR THE HISTORICITY OF THE EMPTY TOMB STORY

Craig lists "ten lines of evidence" for the empirical claim that "Jesus' tomb was found empty on Sunday morning by a small group of his women fol-

lowers."[4] Before listing his arguments, though, I want to point out that Craig's claim requires that the relevant parts of the Markan empty tomb story be true. This is because Paul's account does not mention the women, Craig agrees that Mark is the earliest of the four gospels, and all of the details found in the Markan story are found in at least one of the other three accounts.

Craig's ten lines of evidence for the historicity of the story are as follows: (1) the historical credibility of the burial story supports the empty tomb; (2) Paul's testimony implies the historicity of the empty tomb; (3) the presence of the empty tomb pericope in the pre-Markan passion story supports its historicity; (4) the use of "on the first day of the week" instead of "on the third day" points to the primitiveness of the tradition; (5) the narrative is theologically unadorned and nonapologetic; (6) the discovery of the tomb by women is highly probable; (7) the investigation of the empty tomb by Peter and John is historically probable; (8) it would have been impossible for the disciples to proclaim the resurrection in Jerusalem had the tomb not been empty; (9) Jewish polemic presupposes the empty tomb; and (10) Jesus' tomb was not venerated as a shrine. As I read him, it appears that Craig appeals to these facts as part of an inference to the best explanation.[5] I shall argue that Craig's inference is inductively weak.

1.1 IS THE BURIAL STORY HISTORICAL?

Given Jesus' crucifixion by the Romans, what happened to Jesus' corpse after his death? This question is of the utmost importance in assessing the historicity of the empty tomb (and the various explanations for its emptiness), for two reasons. First, in order to say that the tomb became empty, Jesus must have been buried in it. Second, whether Jesus' followers knew where he was buried depends in part on the type of burial he received (assuming he received one at all). If Jesus' followers did not know the location of the body, Craig's case for the empty tomb (and, by extension, his case for the resurrection) is greatly undermined.

Craig's argument from the reliability of the burial story has two stages. The first stage appeals to different features of the Markan burial story in an attempt to show that Joseph of Arimathea honorably buried Jesus in *a* tomb.[6] The second stage of his argument is intended to show that the reliability of the burial story is evidence for the empty tomb.

First Stage: Is the Burial Story Historically Reliable?

So what did happen to Jesus' corpse? The possibilities are rather limited and may be conveniently grouped into three categories.

- Jesus was not buried; his corpse may have been eaten by birds or dogs.
- Jesus was buried dishonorably in a public graveyard of the condemned.
- Jesus was buried honorably in a privately owned tomb.

Craig argues that Joseph of Arimathea honorably buried Jesus in *a* tomb, which later became empty because Jesus rose from the dead. Although Craig at least used to believe that Joseph was a follower of Jesus who buried Jesus in his (Joseph's) own tomb,[7] in his most recent work Craig is careful not to base his argument on such incidental details.[8] An important feature of Craig's argument is that it need not depend upon any claims regarding "Joseph's Christian commitments or whether the tomb was his own."[9]

I shall refer to Craig's position regarding Jesus' burial as the "honorable burial hypothesis." Before I turn to his arguments for that conclusion, I first want to discuss the hypothesis that Jesus was never buried. I join Craig in rejecting that position; I want to focus on the *reasons* for rejecting the notion that Jesus was never buried. I shall then present the case for the dishonorable burial hypothesis, where I shall argue the same historical evidence that disconfirms the nonburial hypothesis *also* confirms a naturalistic hypothesis as the best historical explanation for the empty tomb. Finally, I will critically assess Craig's case for the honorable burial hypothesis.

The Nonburial Hypothesis

In defense of the nonburial hypothesis, proponents appeal to the Roman tendency to deny burial to victims of crucifixion,[10] a punishment normally reserved for "slaves or those who threatened the existing social order."[11] Moreover, as Martin Hengel has shown in his fascinating study of Roman crucifixion, crucifixion served as both a punishment and a deterrent.[12] As Bryon McCane puts it, "The impact of crucifixion could go on for days at a time, as the body of one who had crossed the purposes of

Rome was left hanging in public view, rotting in the sun, with birds pecking away at it."[13]

Of course, the practice of denying burial to Roman crucifixion victims was not absolute; indeed, independently of Jesus' burial and the New Testament, there *are* documented exceptions to this practice.[14] And *if* the Romans were willing to allow an exception in Jesus' case, then it is likely that Jesus would have been buried, since the Jews would have been motivated to prevent the land from being defiled.[15] Thus, there is historical precedent both for the Romans to allow a crucifixion victim to be buried and for the Jews to bury the corpses of their enemies, though it must be emphasized that the majority of Roman crucifixion victims were never buried. In other words, prior to considering the unique circumstances surrounding a given Roman crucifixion, there is a low prior probability that the crucifixion victim would be buried.

But once we take the circumstances into account the issue becomes a bit more complicated. Let's divide Roman crucifixion victims into two groups: (1) those that were crucified as part of a mass crucifixion ("victims of mass crucifixions"); and (2) those that were not crucified as part of a mass crucifixion ("victims of small crucifixions").[16] Mass crucifixions could involve the crucifixion of literally hundreds or even thousands of people at a time.[17] So far as we know, all mass crucifixions were performed to maintain the social order during times of open revolt against Rome.[18] During such times, the Romans would want to deny burial, so that the crucifixions might serve as a deterrent to other would-be insurgents. Therefore, for victims of mass crucifixions, the prior probability of burial is not only low, but *extremely* low.

As for victims of small crucifixions, many sources attest instances of burial for them. These sources reveal the kind of circumstances in which burial might be allowed. Those circumstances include: a request from a friend of the Roman governor;[19] and the approach of a holy day (Roman or otherwise).[20] Thus, the prior probability of burial for victims of small crucifixions is also low (although not nearly as low as that for victims of mass crucifixions).

There is one final preliminary matter to consider: the prior probability that a pious Jew would approach Pilate and request Jesus' body. Jesus was executed by the Romans for the *political* crime of being the King of the Jews, not for the *theological* charge of blasphemy. On this basis, David Daube has suggested that the Jews may not have considered Jesus a criminal.[21] And if the Jews believed that Jesus had been crucified for an act that did not violate

divine law, then there is historical precedent for believing they would have given Jesus an honorable burial.[22] This is all moot, however, given that the Sanhedrin found Jesus guilty of blasphemy.[23] Under Jewish law, such a crime was punishable by death by stoning (Num. 24:16). Daube also proposes that one of the references to the Rabbinic law in question is an "anti-Christian hyperbole" invented "to show that Jesus could not have escaped being buried in a public grave."[24] But even if Daube were right about this, this would only explain away the reference to the Rabbinic law in the later Tosefta (circa 300 CE). This would not negate the independent confirmation of the Rabbinic law in the earlier Mishnah (circa 200 CE). But it is far from obvious that Christianity is even the context of the passage in the Tosefta. And therefore Daube has not shown that the reference to the Rabbinic law in the Tosefta is an anti-Christian hyperbole. So there is still good reason for believing that the Jews would have desired Jesus' burial. Hence, there is a high prior probability that an official representative of the Jewish council would have approached Pilate and requested Jesus' body.

The crucial question is whether the specific evidence concerning Jesus' burial is sufficient to overcome its initial improbability. And one's answer to that question will in turn hinge upon what sort of general presumption, if any, one has about the general reliability of the texts which contain this specific evidence. Obviously, if one believes that the relevant texts are generally empirically accurate,[25] one will accept the references to Jesus' burial in those texts as prima facie evidence for Jesus' burial. But, given the low prior probability of a buried crucifixion victim, those of us who lack a general presumption for historicity will reject the claim that Jesus was buried until a convincing argument can be made specifically for Jesus' burial.

But I believe that the specific evidence for Jesus' burial is sufficient to overcome the intrinsic improbability of a crucifixion victim being buried. Since Judea was not in open rebellion against Rome at the time of Jesus' death,[26] and since Jesus was apparently crucified as part of a small crucifixion, the Romans would have had no need for the deterrent provided by nonburial. Moreover, Jesus died right before a Jewish holy day. It is highly likely that the Romans would have been respectful of Jewish law regarding burial of executed criminals before Passover, especially since this would "avoid unrest among the large numbers of visitors for the festival."[27] Finally, like Craig, I think the role of Joseph of Arimathea in the story of Jesus' burial is much

more likely on the assumption of a historical burial than on the nonburial hypothesis. Therefore, the burial of Jesus by Joseph of Arimathea has a high final probability.

The Dishonorable Burial Hypothesis

The dishonorable burial hypothesis is the view that Jesus was buried dishonorably in the graveyard of the condemned, in accordance with Rabbinic law.[28] Although the Jews believed the dead should be buried, not all Jewish burials had the same rites. Jewish law, in fact, recognized two types of burials: honorable and dishonorable. An honorable burial included anointing, wrapping linen strips around the body, placement in a family tomb, sealing the tomb, and mourning. Most Jewish burials were honorable ones. In contrast, dishonorable burial was reserved for criminals condemned by the Jewish court; it lacked the rites of mourning and burial in a family tomb. Instead, the condemned were buried in a public graveyard reserved by the Jewish court.[29] There is, therefore, a high prior probability that the Jews would bury an executed criminal like Jesus dishonorably.

At first glance, it might seem that the Markan burial story contradicts what our other sources tell us about Jewish burial practices for condemned criminals. For in the Markan story, Joseph of Arimathea buries Jesus in a *tomb*, and tomb burial has sometimes been viewed as incompatible with dishonorable burial.[30] Nevertheless, dishonorable burial probably included tomb burial in first-century Palestine. First, Mishnah Sanhedrin 6 implies tomb burial when it refers to secondary burial of the bones ("when the flesh had wasted away . . ."); since the Bronze Age, secondary burial was practiced in tombs, not shallow earth graves. Second, there is the evidence provided by Yehohanan, the only crucified man for whom we have found remains. His remains were found in an ossuary within his family tomb. This is some evidence, though weak, favoring tomb burial over burial in shallow earth graves. Third, burial narratives from first-century Palestine always depict or presuppose burial in an underground tomb rather than a shallow grave.[31] Thus, the evidence makes it highly likely that the condemned were buried in public tombs, not shallow earth graves.[32]

Once it is understood that dishonorable burial included tomb burial, the Markan burial story no longer seems implausible in light of our background

knowledge. Moreover, although the other gospels assert the tomb in which Jesus was buried belonged to Joseph of Arimathea and had never been used—claims which have an extremely low prior probability—Mark makes no such claim. Indeed, on this basis, one might be tempted to say the Markan burial story just *is* an account of Jesus' dishonorable burial.[33] Doubts begin to arise, however, when we consider the *incompleteness* of the burial rites described in Mark. Even dishonorable burials required washing and anointing of the body, but Mark reports that these rites were not completed on Friday. In other words, whatever we may call Mark's account of the handling of Jesus' body on Friday, it was not a complete burial, at least as far as first-century Jews were concerned.

A special version of the dishonorable burial hypothesis is the relocation hypothesis. According to the relocation hypothesis, Jesus' body was stored (but not buried) in Joseph's tomb Friday before sunset and moved on Saturday night to a second tomb in the graveyard of the condemned, where Jesus was buried dishonorably. Although the Markan burial story does not entail that the tomb belonged to Joseph, nothing in the story rules out ownership by Joseph, either. Moreover, the relocation hypothesis is superior to the generic dishonorable burial hypothesis, for the following reasons:

(a) *The Markan story portrays the burial as rushed.* The relocation hypothesis can make better sense out of the chronology implied by Mark's gospel, which clearly portrays Jesus' burial as rushed. This is evident from (i) the unusually short amount of time it took Jesus to die on the cross (Mark 15:25–34); (ii) the lateness of Joseph's request for permission to bury Jesus (v. 42); (iii) Pilate's *surprise* at the news of Jesus' apparent death and Pilate's need for verification (vv. 43–45); (iv) the time required to wait for the centurion to confirm the death of Jesus (v. 44); (v) Joseph's having to purchase a linen cloth (v. 46); and (vi) Jesus not having been anointed on Friday (16:1). In other words, Joseph had *very* little time to take the body down and lay it in a tomb before the Sabbath. But if Joseph was operating under tight time constraints, it becomes doubtful that he would have had sufficient time before sunset to transport the body to the graveyard of the condemned, which was located "outside the walls of Jerusalem."[34] In contrast, John 19:42 explains that the tomb in which Jesus was buried was "nearby."

(b) *If John 20:2 has a historical basis, Mary apparently thought Jesus had been moved.* Even if we regard the Johannine burial story as the latest in a series of

increasingly favorable accounts of Jesus' burial, that view does not explain why the Johannine burial story includes the statement attributed to Mary. That is to say, that statement does not seem to be redactional. Given the dishonorable burial hypothesis, there is no antecedent reason to expect such a statement. In contrast, the relocation hypothesis explains why the Johannine story includes such a statement.

(c) *Joseph would have defiled his own tomb by storing Jesus' body in it.* Placement of Jesus' body in Joseph's tomb is compatible with both the relocation hypothesis as well as the hypothesis that Joseph gave Jesus an honorable burial in his tomb ("honorable burial hypothesis"). Nevertheless, the latter hypothesis has an extremely low prior probability, which can be seen from the following dilemma. Either Joseph was a secret disciple of Jesus or he was not. If Joseph was not a follower of Jesus, then it is extremely unlikely that he would have buried a condemned criminal like Jesus in his own tomb. If, however, we assume that Joseph was a follower of Jesus, that would explain why Joseph might have buried Jesus in his (Joseph's) own tomb, but such an assumption itself has an extremely low prior probability.[35] In contrast, the relocation hypothesis *both* explains the temporary storage of Jesus' body in Joseph's tomb, and is consistent with our background information about the Jewish Sanhedrin.

(d) *The relocation hypothesis explains the empty tomb itself.* The relocation hypothesis entails an empty (first) tomb; the dishonorable burial hypothesis does not. Hence the empty tomb is some evidence favoring the former over the latter.

In an apparent response to the relocation hypothesis, the only objection Craig offers is that if one accepts the above scenario, "then one seems to be at a loss to explain what happened to the two thieves crucified with Jesus (Mark 15:27, 32). Why were they not also deposited in the tomb with Jesus?"[36] But this is rather easily answered. First, we don't know when the two *lestai* died. Given the unusually short amount of time it took for Jesus to die on the cross, it would not be surprising if the two thieves did not die until later, perhaps even several days later. Second, the argument, "The gospels don't state Joseph buried the two thieves; therefore, he didn't," is an argument from silence. It's not clear to me such an argument is inductively correct. For all we know antecedently, Mark may not mention a burial of the two thieves by Joseph because it was embarrassing to Mark. (Being buried

alone would have been more dignified than being buried with other condemned criminals.) Third, assume for the sake of argument that the two *lestai* died at roughly the same time as Jesus, but were not buried by Joseph. Byron McCane has convincingly argued that the dishonorable burial hypothesis could explain that, since

> burial in shame was relevant only to those criminals who had been condemned by the action of some Jewish (or Israelite) authority. Dishonorable burial was reserved for those who had been condemned by the people of Israel. *Semahot* 2.9, in fact, specifically exempts those that die at the hands of other authorities.[37]

Thus, the fate of the bodies of the two *lestai* in no way undermines the relocation hypothesis.

If Joseph was not a sympathizer of Jesus and instead was a pious Jew who temporarily stored Jesus' corpse in a tomb and then later moved it to another location, the question arises as to whether Joseph would have prevented the spread of Christianity. Certainly, in the scenario I have described (where Jesus' body was moved), Joseph of Arimathea would have known that Jesus was not resurrected. But, as I argue in 1.8, there is no evidence that Christians began to preach the resurrection until at least seven weeks after the resurrection. And after that length of time, Joseph would not have been able to silence the disciples by simply pointing to the body. The location of the body in the graveyard of the condemned, combined with the advanced state of decomposition, would have made unambiguous identification impossible. Joseph could have produced the body, but the disciples could simply have denied it was Jesus.

I believe that the relocation hypothesis has a high final probability, higher than either the generic dishonorable burial hypothesis or the honorable burial hypothesis. Like Craig, I think it is much more likely that Jesus was buried in a tomb than in a shallow earth grave. But that is where my agreement with Craig ends. Unlike Craig, I also consider it much easier to suppose that Joseph used his own tomb to temporarily *store* Jesus' body than it is to suppose that Joseph used his own tomb to *bury* Jesus. But if Joseph's only motivation for burying Jesus were compliance with Jewish law, surely Joseph would have also complied with the Jewish regulation that condemned criminals must be buried in the graveyard of the condemned. Thus, the same

historical precedent that disconfirms the nonburial hypothesis *also* confirms the relocation hypothesis as the best historical explanation. I shall defend the relocation hypothesis against Craig's arguments for the honorable burial hypothesis below.

Craig's Case for the Honorable Burial Hypothesis

Craig argues for the honorable burial hypothesis, which he thinks is supported by the Markan burial story.[38] (I deliberately refer to this tradition as "the Markan story" and not "the pre-Markan story" since, as I discuss in section 1.3, I do not assume the existence of a pre-Markan passion story that included an empty tomb tradition.) Craig offers numerous arguments in defense of the honorable burial hypothesis, many of which are redundant with his later arguments for the empty tomb and shall be discussed later. His arguments and assertions unique to the burial tradition are that: (a) Paul's testimony provides evidence of burial by Joseph of Arimathea; (b) as a member of the Sanhedrin, it is unlikely that Joseph of Arimathea is a Christian invention; (c) Joseph's laying the body in his own tomb is probably historical; (d) Jesus was buried late on the Day of Preparation; and (e) no other burial tradition exists, not "even in Jewish polemic."[39]

But in fact I think there is no good reason to accept the Markan burial story. Concerning (a), as E. L. Bode writes, "'Buried' stands in parallel with 'died'; this confirms the notion that 'died' and 'buried' are to be taken together. They emphasize the reality and apparent finality of Jesus' death."[40] If Bode's interpretation is correct, Paul would not even have to *believe* that Jesus was buried, much less *know* it. (I'm not suggesting that Paul actually believed Jesus was left on the cross to rot; I'm merely pointing out that such a scenario is consistent with his statement.[41]) But even if one supposes, as I do, that Paul really did believe Jesus was buried, his statement that Jesus was buried is neutral with respect to all of the specific burial scenarios I listed earlier (e.g., the dishonorable burial hypothesis, the relocation hypothesis, and the honorable burial hypothesis). Paul did not even need to know the details of Jesus' burial in order to assert that Jesus was "buried"; Paul could have declared that Jesus "died" and was "buried" even if Jesus had been dishonorably buried in the graveyard of the condemned. Moreover, Paul provides no details whatsoever about the burial: he says nothing about Joseph of Ari-

mathea, when the burial happened, the nature or location of the burial site, whether anyone guarded it, or what the Jews had to say or do in the matter. Finally, the very word Paul used for "buried" in the original Greek (*etaphê*) is neutral: it is just as compatible with an honorable burial as it is with a dishonorable burial.[42]

As for (b), that Joseph of Arimathea is unlikely to be a Christian invention, I find Craig's argument persuasive. This is evidence favoring burial over nonburial, but not honorable burial over relocation.

Turning to (c), Joseph's laying the body in his own tomb, this point just might be true. If Joseph was forced to bury Jesus quickly before the Sabbath and if his tomb was nearby, Joseph may well have been forced to store the body in his own tomb as a matter of practical necessity. But whether Joseph would have intended to leave Jesus' body there permanently is another matter entirely. Once the Sabbath had passed, surely Joseph, as both a pious Jew and a member of the Sanhedrin, would have moved the body out of his own tomb and into a permanent location more suitable for a criminal.[43]

Craig's assertion (d), that Jesus was buried late on the Day of Preparation, is not much of an argument as it stands. Indeed, it begs the question against the nonburial hypothesis by assuming Jesus was buried. And although Craig appeals to "what we know from extrabiblical sources about Jewish regulations concerning the handling of executed criminals and burial procedures,"[44] as we've seen, extrabiblical sources *also* document that the Jews usually buried condemned criminals in the graveyard of the condemned. Indeed, Craig himself seems to admit this when he speculates that the two *lestai* crucified alongside Jesus may have been "taken down and immediately dumped into some common grave."[45]

Finally, (e) is irrelevant. Even if there were no competing burial tradition, that would not make the Markan tradition probable. Craig's argument is an argument from silence (concerning the alleged lack of competing burial traditions). Of course, some arguments from silence are inductively correct. But, in this instance, Craig's argument is at best incomplete. Just because alternative accounts are possible does not mean they are probable.[46] Craig has not shown that the alleged lack of competing burial traditions is unlikely on the hypothesis that some alternative to the Markan story is true. Indeed, as I argue in section 1.8, there is no evidence that the Jewish authorities were even interested in the matter.

In sum, then, Craig has not presented an inductively correct argument for the truth of the honorable burial hypothesis.

Second Stage: Is the Burial Story Evidence for an Empty Tomb?

Turning to the second stage of Craig's argument for the historicity of the empty tomb, Craig argues that if the burial story were reliable, then the location of Jesus' tomb would have been known. "But in that case, the tomb must have been empty, when the disciples began to preach that Jesus was risen."[47] If the tomb were not empty, Craig argues, no one would have believed the resurrection; furthermore, Jewish authorities would have decisively refuted the resurrection by simply pointing to Jesus' (occupied) tomb.

I have argued that Joseph laid Jesus' body in a tomb on Friday, and then on Saturday night moved and buried the body dishonorably in a second tomb in the criminals' graveyard. If that is correct, the question arises as to whether the tomb was known. On the relocation hypothesis, it is certain that Joseph (and his helpers, if any) could have identified the exact location of the body within the graveyard of the condemned. Whether the disciples would have known the location of the second tomb, however, is far from certain. It is unlikely that the disciples would have observed the relocation on Saturday night. And although the disciples may well have suspected that the body had been moved to the graveyard of the condemned,[48] it is unclear if they would have been able to identify, on their own, the precise location of the body within that graveyard. Thus, if the disciples learned the location of the second tomb, it is highly likely they would have learned that information from someone else: either Joseph, one of his helpers, or another member of the Sanhedrin.

Since there was at least one, if not several, Jews who knew the location of Jesus' body, the question becomes: what motive would they have had to tell the disciples the location? On the one hand, the Jews might have desired to keep the location secret, at least at first, in order to prevent the disciples from dignifying his dishonorable burial by mourning him or from venerating the tomb of a blasphemer.[49] On the other hand, the Jews might have wanted to make the location of the tomb known, either as a courtesy to the disciples or in order to squelch the rumor of Jesus' resurrection. These motives are clearly in conflict, and I am not sure how to weigh the former

against the latter. Because of this, I am not sure how to judge the prior probability that one of the people who knew the location of Jesus' body would have shared that information with the disciples. Nevertheless, it seems clear that there is at least a nonnegligible prior probability that the disciples eventually learned the location of the second tomb.

Moreover, there is no evidence the Jews responded to the Christian proclamation of the empty tomb by pointing to the location of the second tomb. And if there is a historical basis to the Jewish polemic, it would appear that at least some Jews responded to the Christian proclamation of the empty tomb by accusing the disciples of stealing the body.[50] This would be antecedently more likely on the assumption that the disciples knew the correct location of the (second) tomb than on the assumption that the location was unknown. Therefore, in the remainder of my response, I shall assume the disciples learned the location of the second tomb.

Yet even if the location of the second tomb were known by the disciples, that fact would still not bolster the credibility of the empty tomb story. First, one could believe that Jesus was honorably buried and yet justifiably reject the claim that no other corpses were buried in Jesus' tomb. If Jesus had been buried with others—possibly the two *lestai* allegedly crucified with him—then the unambiguous identification of Jesus' corpse would be problematic, since prior to his resurrection neither his followers nor his enemies were expecting his resurrection. As A. J. M. Wedderburn writes:

> Such a fate for Jesus' body would at any rate also explain how neither the disciples nor the Jewish authorities could subsequently prove anything either way by investigating graves: the relevant one would have held the remains of others, so that it would not be empty; equally, however, the fact that it was not empty would not disprove the Christians' claims unless Jesus' remains could be identified.[51]

Second, even if Jesus had been buried alone in a known location, that fact would still not increase the likelihood that Jesus' (second) tomb was empty. As I shall argue below (see 1.8), there is no evidence that the Jewish authorities—especially the pivotal Joseph of Arimathea—even cared to refute Christian claims. Third, even if the Jewish authorities did try to refute the resurrection by pointing to the second tomb, there is no reason to believe they would have done so until seven weeks after the first tomb had been dis-

covered empty. By that time, the authorities would not have been able to conclusively refute the resurrection (again, see 1.8). Thus, the degree to which *knowledge of the location* of the first tomb supports the emptiness of that tomb is dependent to a large extent upon *when* Jesus' followers learned of its location. It is strange that defenders of arguments for the empty tomb based upon the burial story have paid so little attention to that matter.[52]

Of course, if Joseph of Arimathea did move the body of Jesus—and the bodies of the two thieves, if they were present—the (first) tomb would indeed have been empty. Yet, in direct contradiction to the explanation offered in Mark 16:6, the *cause* of that emptiness would have been that Jesus had been moved somewhere else. And since the Markan burial and empty tomb stories say nothing about movement of the body by Joseph of Arimathea, they do not provide any evidence that Jesus' burial place in the graveyard of the condemned was empty.

This is significant, for two reasons. First, given the alleged failure of naturalistic explanations of the empty tomb, Craig has argued that the empty tomb *alone* "might cause us to believe that the resurrection of Jesus is the best explanation."[53] I agree with Craig that the traditional theft, apparent death, and wrong tomb hypotheses are unlikely.[54] But the relocation hypothesis is not equivalent to (or entailed by) any of those theories. The relocation hypothesis is not equivalent to the wrong tomb theory proposed by Kirsopp Lake. On the wrong tomb theory, the women were lost and never went to the first tomb. In contrast, the relocation hypothesis is consistent with the women going to the first tomb. Nor is the relocation hypothesis equivalent to the theft hypothesis, since relocation and subsequent burial by Joseph would not constitute theft and Joseph was not a disciple of Jesus. Thus, Craig's discussion of naturalistic explanations for the empty tomb is, at best, incomplete.

Second, he routinely appeals to the historicity of the empty tomb along with two other alleged facts as part of an overall inference to the resurrection as the best explanation.[55] Yet if the first tomb was empty and Jesus lay in the second tomb, Craig's inference is greatly (if not fatally) undermined. Not only would there be no need to posit a resurrection in order to explain the emptiness of the first tomb, but, more important, Jesus' body would have remained in the grave.

1.2. DID PAUL KNOW THAT JESUS' PERMANENT BURIAL PLACE WAS EMPTY?

The historical value of 1 Corinthians 15:3–8 cannot be overemphasized. Not only is it an account of the resurrection written by someone who claimed to have personally seen an "appearance" of Jesus after his death, but also it is the earliest of all extant resurrection accounts. Both of these points have special importance with respect to the historicity of the empty tomb. If Paul did not *believe* the tomb was empty, then that would be strong evidence that the story is legendary. If, on the other hand, Paul *knew* that Jesus' tomb was empty, then that would be strong evidence for the historicity of the empty tomb. Thus, whether Paul knew, or even believed, there was an empty tomb is a watershed issue for the historicity of the empty tomb.

At first glance, it seems terribly uncertain whether Paul knew of an empty tomb. In stark contrast to the gospels, which depict in some detail women visiting an empty tomb, Paul does not even mention an empty tomb and instead simply says that Jesus "was buried." Indeed, as we saw in 1.1, Paul is even ambiguous about the nature of Jesus' burial. Yet the implications of that reference have provoked considerable debate. On the skeptical side, Uta Ranke-Heinemann argues that Paul's silence about the empty tomb shows that Paul didn't believe there was one and therefore the story is a legend.[56] On the historicist side, Craig argues that Paul *knew* there was an empty tomb. To save space, I will comment only on Craig's argument.

Craig's argument from Paul's testimony has two stages. The first stage appeals to various phrases in Paul's testimony in an attempt to show that Paul believed Jesus' tomb was empty. As Craig recognizes, however, even if Paul *believed* that Jesus' burial place was empty, it does not follow that Paul *knew* it was empty.[57] Therefore, the second stage of his argument is designed to show that Paul did not just dogmatically believe it was empty, but that he knew it was empty. Again, to save space I will discuss only the second stage.

According to Craig, Paul knew Jesus' burial place was empty from two sources: (a) his conversations with various Christians who knew it was empty, and (b) his own alleged visit to Jesus' burial place, prior to his conversion.[58]

Regarding (a), unless Paul was a total "recluse" (which I agree seems unlikely), it is quite probable that Paul would have talked with other Christians about the resurrection. As C. H. Dodd wryly noted in an oft-quoted statement,

"We may presume that [the disciples] did not spend all their time talking about the weather."[59] If the disciples knew that Jesus' burial place were empty (see 1.1), then Paul could have learned that information from the disciples.

As for (b), note the nature of Craig's claim: he simply suggests that Paul *may* have visited the empty tomb before his conversion, not that Paul *probably* did. Yet even if some Jews had checked Jesus' burial place, that doesn't make it probable that Paul would have visited that location himself. The pre-Christian Paul would not have had to personally go to Jesus' burial place in order to believe his fellow Pharisees who stated that, say, Jesus' corpse was rotting. Moreover, (b) presupposes that the Jews investigated the Christian claim of an empty tomb prior to Paul's conversion, but that is unlikely for various reasons (see 1.8), the most important of which is that early Jews probably did not take Christian claims seriously. Moreover, even if we suppose that the pre-Christian Paul had visited the tomb (in the graveyard of the condemned), we don't know when he would have done so; such a visit could have been more than a year after Jesus' burial, by which time the tomb would have become used again anyway. So even if Paul believed Jesus' burial place was empty, it is quite unlikely that he knew it was empty.

In summary, Craig has not shown that Paul's scant account of the resurrection of Jesus is evidence for the empty tomb story.

1.3. WAS THE EMPTY TOMB STORY PART OF MARK'S SOURCE MATERIAL?

Craig argues (a) that "the pre-Markan source probably included and may have ended with the discovery of the empty tomb," which (b) implies that "the empty tomb story is very old." Citing Rudolph Pesch, Craig states that "at the latest Mark's source dates from within seven years of Jesus' crucifixion."[60]

Yet even if we assume that there was a pre-Markan passion story,[61] what reason is there to believe (a), that it included the empty tomb story?[62] After all, the pre-Markan passion story, if there was one, was presumably about the *passion*, not the passion *and* the burial. Furthermore, according to Brown, "the majority of scholars" believe the Passion Narrative was once independent of the empty tomb story.[63]

As I read him, Craig presents two supporting arguments: (i) the two stories are linked by grammatical and linguistic ties, forming one smooth, con-

tinuous narrative; and (ii) the passion story is incomplete without victory at the end.[64] I think both of these points are inconclusive, however. Concerning (i), for all we know, these features could just as well be the product of the late author's editing. As for (ii), this point can be turned on its head: if the passion story did not include victory at the end, this would have been a motive for embellishing the story. Indeed, if there were doctrinal reasons to assert a physical resurrection (perhaps to combat Gnostic or other heresies),[65] then there would be an obvious motive for creating and adding an empty tomb story to the pre-Markan passion story.

Just as Craig's arguments on this point are inconclusive, however, so are arguments for the opposite conclusion, namely, that the passion story was once independent of the empty tomb story. The main argument for the latter position appeals to the disagreement between the lists in Mark 15:47 and 16:1.[66] Brown, for example, sums up this position well when he writes, "The names might be expected to agree if the narrative were consecutive."[67] Yet, as Craig rightly points out, the disagreement between the two lists can also be explained by treating "one list or the other as an editorial addition."[68]

If there was a pre-Markan passion source but that story did not include the empty tomb story, then there is no reason for dating Mark's reference to an empty tomb to within seven years after Jesus' crucifixion. Since the idea that there was a pre-Markan source and the idea that it contained a visit to an empty tomb are both hopeful speculations, then so is Craig's attempt to use these hypotheses to backdate the empty tomb story. Since Paul never mentions such a source, nor anything to do with the women or Joseph of Arimathea or tombs or angels, or anything at all to do with the empty tomb, not even the supposedly Jewish polemic against the disappearance of a body mentioned in Matthew (28:11–15), there simply is no ground for backdating the empty tomb story to a Pauline date.

But suppose there was a pre-Markan passion source that included an account of the discovery of the empty tomb by women. Even on that assumption, we do not know the identity or reliability of those women, so the value of their testimony is likewise uncertain.[69]

As for (b), Craig argues that "the high priest" must have been Caiaphas since the pre-Markan passion story never mentions the name of "the high priest as Caiaphas." Thus, since Caiaphas was high priest from 18–37 CE, Craig argues the tradition cannot be later than 37 CE.[70] Yet this argument

is multiply flawed. First, for all we know, the reason the high priest is not named could be that Mark was written so late that he does not know it, thus making a pre-Markan story *less* likely. Second, even if we assume the existence of a hypothetical pre-Markan passion narrative, there seems to be no reason for assuming that it did not mention the name of the high priest as Caiaphas. Again, since we don't have the original source, Craig is simply speculating. Third, even if we assume the pre-Markan passion story did not mention the name of the high priest, Craig's argument is another argument from silence (concerning the name of the high priest). And he makes this argument after scolding New Testament scholars who "too rashly conclude from silence that Paul 'knows nothing' of the empty tomb"![71] Again, Craig's argument is, at best, incomplete. Craig has not shown that the lack of mention of the high priest's name is unlikely on the hypothesis that the pre-Markan passion source was written after the high priest's reign had ended. Indeed, (Craig has not even shown that the name of the high priest was important to the story!)

1.4. IS THE MARKAN EXPRESSION, "THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK," EVIDENCE THAT THE EMPTY TOMB STORY IS PRIMITIVE?

Craig's fourth argument for the historicity of the empty tomb is that Mark's account (16:2) contains the expression "the first day of the week" to describe the day on which the women discovered the empty tomb. According to Craig, that expression must "be very old and very primitive because it lacks altogether the third day motif prominent in the kerygma, which is itself extremely old, as evident by its appearance in I Cor. 15:4."[72] Furthermore, although the expression

> is very awkward in the Greek, when translated back into Aramaic it is perfectly smooth and normal. This suggests that the empty tomb tradition reaches all the way back to the original language spoken by the first disciples themselves.[73]

Thus, Craig insists, the empty tomb tradition is *too early* to be legendary.

However, I do not think Craig has been able to show that the empty tomb story is early. Although Craig is correct that the kerygma uses the third day

motif, the kerygma uses that motif in reference to the resurrection, not the empty tomb. Furthermore, the gospels also employ the third day motif when referring to the resurrection itself (Mark 9:31; Matt. 16:21, 20:19; Luke 9:22). In contrast, Mark and the other gospels use the expression, "the first day of the week," to refer to the day the women visited the tomb (Mark 16:2, Matt. 28:1, Luke 24:1, John 20:1). As Peter Kirby writes, "The introduction of this new phrase may very well parallel the introduction of the new idea that women visited an empty tomb."[74] Moreover, Kirby notes, the phrase may be an "implicit explanation" for the women visiting the tomb *when* they did: namely, that they had rested on the Sabbath. Such an explanation is made explicit in Luke 23:56. Finally, Kirby points out that Mark 16:9, which is universally regarded as a later addition to the text, employs the first day motif. Thus, contrary to what Craig asserts, it seems that legendary material could avoid "being cast in the prominent, ancient, and accepted third day motif."[75]

Furthermore, the expression "the first day of the week" is not too awkward in Greek to be original with Mark. What Craig forgets to mention here is that this is the exact same language spoken by Paul and by numerous Christian converts throughout the first century, thus it does not make probable an origin with the first disciples. Moreover, Craig's contention that "on the first day of the week" is "very awkward in the Greek" is not relevant—it is a Hebraic form commonly used by Greek-speaking Jews in Hellenistic times. It was not awkward to them. Indeed, the exact same phrase appears in Acts 20:7 (*tê mia tôn sabbatôn*, "on the first day of the week"), and a similar expression appears in a bit of advice Paul gives to his congregation in Corinth (1 Cor. 16:2, *kata mian sabbatou*, "every first of the week"). Thus, Craig has simply given no reason to believe that "on the first day of the week" is more probable on the hypothesis of a historical empty tomb than on the hypothesis that the story is legendary.

So why did Mark refer to the "the first day of the week"? Given that the structure of Mark's narrative sequence is based on what day of the week it is, it seems to me that Mark used the expression simply to complete the sequence of his narrative. Mark was probably just following up on his account of the burial, which implies that the women were unable to prepare the body before the Sabbath, *the last day of the week*.[76] This is confirmed by the wording found in the late addition to Mark (16:9) which repeats the first day motif, not the third day motif which Craig says is typical of late additions.

In sum, then, Craig has not shown that "the first day of the week" is evidence for the primitiveness of the empty tomb story. Evangelical Stephen T. Davis, who accepts the conclusions of Craig's fourth argument, nonetheless is forced to admit that he does "not wish to place great emphasis on this point; it is, after all, hard to prove that such expressions could not or would not have been used in, say, a late first-century Diaspora text."[77]

1.5. THE STORY IS SIMPLE AND LACKS LEGENDARY DEVELOPMENT

Fifth, Craig argues that the Markan account of the empty tomb is simple and lacks legendary development. He compares the Markan account to two accounts widely recognized as legendary, the Gospel of Peter and the Ascension of Isaiah. Whereas the latter "are colored by theological and other developments," he argues, the Markan account "is a simple, straightforward report of what happened."[78] Thus, Craig concludes, it is unlikely that the empty tomb story is legendary.

Craig is certainly correct that the Markan account of the empty tomb story is relatively simple, *especially* when compared to accounts like the Gospel of Peter and the Ascension of Isaiah. But this hardly makes it likely that the Markan empty tomb story is true. On the contrary, it seems to me that there are good reasons to reject Craig's a priori assumptions about what an empty tomb story would have included if it were legendary. First, even on the assumption that the empty tomb story is legendary, the story would still be older than the Gospel of Peter and the Ascension of Isaiah. We would expect the Markan story to contain less fantastic elements than second-century legends. Second, and most important, the Markan empty tomb narrative is solely an empty tomb narrative. Not only is the resurrection itself not described, but Mark lacks postresurrection appearances. In contrast, the Gospel of Peter and the Ascension of Isaiah are complete accounts of Jesus' resurrection, including a description of the resurrection itself, an empty tomb narrative, and an appearance narrative. And most of the "theological and other developments" in the latter documents are found precisely within the sections that the Markan account of the resurrection lacks. Most of the motifs listed by Craig as legendary—including a description of the resurrection itself, reflection on Jesus' triumph over sin and death, quotation of ful-

filled prophecy, or a description of the risen Jesus—are not found within the empty tomb stories of the Gospel of Peter or the Ascension of Isaiah.[79] In other words, while the resurrection stories in both the Gospel of Peter and the Ascension of Isaiah are "theologically adorned," the empty tomb stories in both accounts do not appear to be significantly more theologically adorned than that of the Gospel of Mark. Thus, on the assumption that the empty tomb story was legendary, we would not expect it to contain most of the motifs listed by Craig. The only motif listed by Craig that is even found within the empty tomb narrative of either second-century document is the Gospel of Peter's use of the christological title, "Lord." And it would be a weak argument from silence indeed to say that the Markan empty tomb story is probably historical on the basis that Jesus is not described there using that particular christological title.[80] While the story certainly could have included the christological title, "Lord," it is far from obvious that, on the assumption that the story is legendary, the author would have inserted one. Indeed, in a passage declaring Jesus' resurrection, the author may have regarded Jesus' Lordship as too obvious to mention. Moreover, given that the rest of Mark's gospel is relatively sparse, the lack of christological titles may simply be typical of the writer's style.

Does the Markan empty tomb story contain any legendary elements? It is sometimes suggested that the reference to the "young man" is legendary. Given that the story has the women learning of the empty tomb from the "young man," his role is clearly integral to the story.[81] In Bode's words, the young man's proclamation "explains and *provides* the heavenly meaning of the empty tomb."[82] So if the "young man" is legendary, that would be a significant legendary development in the story.

But is the "young man" legendary? About the only reason ever given for believing so is that this "young man" is actually an angel, and the appearance of an angel with a divine message is legendary. Let's consider this argument in detail. Although Mark never explicitly identifies this young man as an angel, many commentators, apparently including Craig, nevertheless identify this "young man" as an angel.[83] I shall assume, then, that that identification is correct. The crucial issue is whether the angelic appearance is historical. And while historians who are deciding that issue will have to take into account their own beliefs about the existence of angels,[84] other factors must be involved as well. Clearly, if angels do not exist, then the Markan

story of the angelic appearance at the tomb cannot be historical. But even if angels exist, that does not entail that the story is historical. That would simply make it *possible* for the story to be historical. The historian would still need to consider the story according to its individual merits. But this entails that a historian may accept the existence of angels and yet deny the historicity of Mark's angelic appearance on *historical* grounds, not philosophical or theological ones.

One such historian is E. L. Bode, on whom Craig relies heavily in his writings on the resurrection. As a Roman Catholic, Bode believes in the reality of angels and therefore has no axe to grind against the supernatural. But for historical reasons, Bode regards the Markan story of the angelic appearance as a legendary embellishment:

> Rather our position is that the angel appearance does not belong to the historical nucleus of the tomb tradition. This omission does not call into question the existence of angelic beings. This stance is taken for two reasons: (1) the kerygmatic and redactional nature of the angel's message and (2) the omission gives a better insight into the tomb tradition and its development.[85]

Bode's second point is especially interesting given his belief that the empty tomb story is rooted in an ancient, historical tradition. Nevertheless, he argues, the angel cannot belong to the historical nucleus of the Markan empty tomb story, since that would be "opposed to the silence of the women in Mark," among other things.[86] In response to Bode, Craig objects that "the women's silence was not permanent or we should not have any story at all." I shall have more to say about the permanence of the women's silence below, but for now I note that, ironically, Craig's objection simply substitutes one legendary embellishment for another. Craig may defend the historicity of the angel by denying the historicity of the women's silence if he wishes, but he cannot maintain that the Markan story is free from legendary development. And if we say that the women's silence is legendary, then that would be a significant embellishment to the story, for reasons I discuss below. I agree with Bode that the angel is a typical *literary* motif used to introduce a desired divine message.[87] But that entails that the Markan story of the empty tomb contains at least one major legendary embellishment.

1.6. THE DISCOVERY OF THE TOMB BY WOMEN

Craig's sixth argument for the historicity of the empty tomb is that the story has *women* discovering the empty tomb. He writes, "Given the relatively low status of women in Jewish society and their lack of qualification to serve as legal witnesses," the discovery of the empty tomb by women would have been highly embarrassing to the Christian church.[88] Thus, if the empty tomb story were a legend invented by the church, we would expect the story to have men, not women, discover the tomb. Therefore, the discovery of the empty tomb by women is much more probable given a historical empty tomb than a legendary one.

The discovery of the empty tomb by women is perfectly compatible with relocation by Joseph of Arimathea. Nevertheless, it seems to me that Craig's argument from the role of the women in the story, against the hypothesis that the empty tomb is a legend, is overstated. Having women discover the empty tomb may have been somewhat embarrassing to the church, but, if so, that would have been for reasons that had nothing to do with their qualification to serve as *legal* witnesses, since the women are not portrayed as *legal* witnesses in the story.[89] Besides, women *were* qualified to serve as legal witnesses if no male witnesses were available. Even no less an Evangelical than J. P. Moreland rejects Craig's absolutism, when he writes, "A woman was not allowed to give testimony in a court of law *except on rare occasions*."[90] Another Evangelical, John Wenham, quotes the Rev. R. T. Beckwith as follows:

> Siphre Deuteronomy 190 is the oldest work which disqualifies women from acting as witnesses, and it does so on the rather curious grounds that witnesses are referred to in the Old Testament in the masculine. However, the rabbinical lists of persons disqualified to give testimony do not normally include women, and it is clear from three passages in the Mishnah (Yebamoth 16:7; Ketuboth 2:5; Eduyoth 3:6) that *women were allowed to give evidence on matters within their knowledge if there was no male witness available.* Applying this to the resurrection appearances, it would mean that Mary Magdalene was on rabbinical principles entitled to give witness to an appearance of Christ which was made only to her or to her and other women.[91]

Thus it is no surprise that we find Josephus citing women as his only witnesses of what happened inside Masada or at the battle at Gamala.[92] And, according to Pliny the Younger's famous letter to the emperor Trajan, women

deacons were the highest-ranking church representatives he could find to interrogate.[93] That women could serve as witnesses is even documented in the Gospels: according to John 4:39, "Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony." Finally, note that there is no evidence of any anti-Christian polemic that criticizes the church for having women serve as the first witnesses.[94]

Nevertheless, for all we know, the church may have already been in an embarrassing situation: namely, why there was no detailed story of the empty tomb prior to Mark. As I have argued, Craig has not been able to show that Paul knew of an empty tomb. Thus, Mark contains the earliest known story of the empty tomb. Furthermore, Craig admits that "Mark 16:8 represents the original conclusion to that gospel."[95] Thus, since Mark ended his gospel at verse 8 with the women running away and telling "no one" what they had seen—in direct contrast to Matthew and Luke who allege that the women told others—this could easily be interpreted as an attempt on Mark's part to present a plausible reason why "no one" had heard his tale of the empty tomb until some time had passed. The women were so afraid that they didn't tell anyone what they had seen; hence, that would be why the early tradition didn't develop. Note that there is no mention of the women in our earliest source concerning the resurrection, 1 Corinthians.

Against the claim that the Markan story of the empty tomb is legendary, Craig objects that the silence of the women was temporary.[96] He appeals to two considerations: (i) "The silence of the women was surely meant just to be temporary, otherwise the account itself *could not* be part of the pre-Markan passion story";[97] and (ii) it is difficult to believe that the women would have kept silent for thirty years, whereas "the motif of fear and silence in the face of the divine is a typical Markan motif."[98] But (i) begs the question against the possibility that the empty tomb story is legendary. Craig can conclude that the silence was not permanent only by *assuming* that the story is historical. If the empty tomb story were legendary, the author *could* simply make the account be part of the passion story even if the silence were not temporary. Indeed, one is reminded of Matthew's story of the guard at the tomb, which relates supposedly private conversations among Jews that no Christian could have known about. Just as there is no evidence that anyone ever questioned Matthew about his knowledge of those conversations, for all we know no one may have ever scrutinized Mark's claim that the women were silent.

Similarly with regard to (ii), Craig seems to assume that it would have been impossible for the women to keep silent about what they knew, but this just fails to take the legend hypothesis seriously. If the Markan story were a legend, there would have been literally nothing for the women to keep silent about. Furthermore, on the assumption that the story is a Markan creation, we would expect Mark to use fear and silence as the explanation for the mystery his gospel relates precisely *because* that was a typical Markan motif.[99] Hence, both objections carry very little weight.

1.7. THE INVESTIGATION OF THE EMPTY TOMB BY PETER AND JOHN

I believe that Craig's seventh argument, that Peter and John investigated the empty tomb, is undermined by my discussion in 1.6. If there is no reason to credit the story of the women discovering the empty tomb, then there is no reason to believe that there would have been a "women's story" for Peter and John to "check out." But suppose, for the sake of argument, that the women did discover the empty tomb and reported that discovery to the other disciples. Craig argues that the investigation of the empty tomb by Peter and John is historical because it is attested in tradition (Luke 24:12, 24; John 20:3); the story of Peter's denial (Mark 14:66–72) makes it likely that Peter would want to check out the women's story; and it is attested by John himself.[100] According to Craig, this last point shows that the testimony of John "has therefore the same first hand character as Paul's and ought to be accorded equal weight."[101]

At the outset, note that talk of an "investigation of the empty tomb by Peter and John" *begs the question* by presupposing the historicity of the empty tomb. I presume, then, that what Craig meant to say is the following: "the investigation of Jesus' tomb by Peter and John is historically reliable." I would therefore like to discuss three related issues.

First, are the relevant verses authentic? Recall that Craig appeals to three verses—two Lukan, one Johannine—in order to show that Peter and John visited Jesus' burial place. Whereas the Johannine verse (20:3) lists both John and Peter, the two Lukan verses (24:12, 24) do not explicitly mention John. And although one of the Lukan verses (v. 12) explicitly refers to Peter, that verse is absent from some Western manuscripts. Given this textual vari-

ation, some scholars have argued that verse 12 is not Lukan and is instead an interpolation.[102] And if verse 12 is set aside as an interpolation, then the remaining, authentic text of Luke would no longer contain an unambiguous reference to a visit by the disciples, since verse 24 does not mention Peter, and Cleopas isn't one of the disciples.[103] In other words, the only authentic, clear-cut story of Peter's and John's visit to Jesus' burial place would be found in the latest canonical gospel, John.[104] Yet even if that were the case, the Johannine story cannot be dismissed out of hand simply because it appears only in John. As Eleonore Stump points out, "the tradition may be ancient even if the witnesses are late."[105] Moreover, the above discussion assumes Luke 24:12 is an interpolation, a position which is controversial to say the least.[106] I won't attempt to assess the authenticity here, since I lack the relevant expertise. Instead, I shall assume that the verse is authentic.

Second, why is the story of the visit not reported in Mark and Matthew? Remember that Craig believes that women in the first century were not legally qualified to serve as eyewitnesses under Jewish law. If Craig were right about this, then I believe that would render the historicity of the disciples' visit to the tomb very unlikely. If (male) disciples did decide to verify the women's story, then why do two of the earliest gospels mention *only* the discovery by women? Why isn't the alleged visit of the disciples to the tomb mentioned in all of the gospels? Craig may continue to argue that women were not legally qualified to serve as eyewitnesses *or* that the disciples' visit to the tomb is historical, but he cannot plausibly maintain *both* positions. Suppose, then, that Craig abandoned his position that women were not legally qualified to serve as eyewitnesses.[107] Even so, one might still wonder why the story was omitted from Mark and Matthew if it were historical. I find it somewhat odd to believe that if this particular story were historical, it would be missing from two of the earliest gospels. However, I want to emphasize that I am not arguing that the story is unhistorical because it is missing from Matthew and Mark. Indeed, I am willing to concede the historicity of the men's visit in part because I think the evidential value of women's testimony was greater in the first century than Craig supposes.

Third, when did the disciples visit the tomb? As E. L. Bode notes, the story of the disciples' investigation of the tomb presupposes "the report of the women, which according to Mark does not seem to have taken place at least for some time."[108] Remember that Craig believes the women's silence (reported in

Mark) was only temporary, though he never says just how long they remained silent. Yet even if Craig were right that the women eventually broke their silence, surely the author of Mark meant to convey that the women were silent for a longer period of time than it took them to return from the tomb to the disciples. But that would undermine the credibility of the story of the disciples' visit to the tomb. About the only way to maintain the historicity of the disciples' visit, it seems, is to regard the silence of the women as a wholesale fabrication, created by Mark to suit his redactional purposes.[109] But this would contradict Craig's argument that the Markan empty tomb story "is a simple, straightforward report of what happened." So, again, it seems that Craig has some decisions to make. He can either continue to insist that the Markan empty tomb story is an unembellished, historical account (and thereby accept the historicity of the women's silence) or he can retain the historicity of the disciples' visit to the tomb (and admit that the Markan empty tomb story is not a "straightforward report of what happened").

None of the above three considerations provides any evidence against the historicity of the disciples' visit to the tomb, nor are they intended to do so. But they do show that the reports of such a visit are in tension with a couple of Craig's other arguments. And, most important, the relocation hypothesis is perfectly consistent with such a visit, since the relocation hypothesis presupposes an empty tomb.

1.8. COULD FIRST-CENTURY NON-CHRISTIANS PREACH THE RESURRECTION IN *JERUSALEM* IF JESUS LAY IN THE GRAVE?

Eighth, Craig argues that the *location* of the original resurrection claim is itself evidence for the historicity of the empty tomb story. The original proclamation of Jesus' resurrection in Jerusalem—"the very city where [Jesus] was executed and buried"—is highly significant because hostile eyewitnesses would have had easy access to any disconfirming evidence, if such evidence existed.[110] Craig explains thusly:

> If the proclamation of Jesus' resurrection were false, all the Jewish authorities would have had to do to nip the Christian heresy in the bud would have been to point to his tomb or exhume the corpse of Jesus and parade it

> through the streets of the city for all to see. Had the tomb not been empty, then it would have been impossible for the disciples to proclaim the resurrection in Jerusalem as they did.[111]

Craig takes this to be evidence for the historicity of the empty tomb. However, I think this argument is multiply flawed.

First, to claim that the enemies of Christianity did not produce Jesus' body, therefore the body was missing (and presumably resurrected), presupposes an interest in Christianity which first-century non-Christians may not have had. Because of Christianity's status in the twentieth century as a world religion, it is easy to forget that Christianity in the first century was not the center of attention in religious matters. Robert L. Wilken, a Christian historian, points out that "For almost a century Christianity went unnoticed by most men and women in the Roman Empire. . . . [Non-Christians saw] the Christian community as a tiny, peculiar, antisocial, irreligious sect, drawing its adherents from the lower strata of society."[112] First-century Romans had about as much interest in refuting Christian claims as twentieth century skeptics had in refuting the misguided claims of the Heaven's Gate cult: they simply didn't care to refute it. As for the Jews, Jewish sources do not even mention the Resurrection, much less attempt to refute it.[113] As Martin writes, "This hardly suggests that Jewish leaders were actively engaged in attempting to refute the Resurrection story but failing in their efforts."[114] Of course it is possible that the Jews wanted to keep the Resurrection story quiet precisely because they couldn't refute it, but in order for Craig's argument to have any force, he has the burden of proof to show that that mere possibility is probably what happened. Craig has shown nothing of the sort.[115]

Second, even if a non-Christian had been motivated to produce the body, for all we know, it could not have been identified by the time Christians began to publicly proclaim the resurrection. According to Acts 2, Christians did not begin to publicly proclaim the resurrection until nearly *fifty days* after Jesus' death. If that timespan is correct (and not merely a symbolic, historically suspect assertion), the body would have been far too decomposed to be identified without modern forensics, as evidenced by John's statement (11:39) that Lazarus had already started to decompose after just four days. It was precisely for this reason that bodies were wrapped in linen, perfumed, and buried quickly. According to Gerald Bostock, after seven weeks, "the

corpse would not have been easily demonstrated to be the body of Jesus. The time-lag would have made the production of the body a futile exercise, even if its production could have proved anything of significance."[116] I confirmed Bostock's objection by contacting John Nernoff III, a retired pathologist, and asked him about the decomposition of a body at 65 degrees Fahrenheit. According to Nernoff, a face will become nearly unrecognizable after several days at 65 degrees Fahrenheit.[117] Of course, for all we know, the temperature inside Jesus' tomb may have been much colder than 65 degrees Fahrenheit. As Craig points out, "Jerusalem, being 700 meters above sea level, can be quite cool in April."[118] Unfortunately, given the lack of meteorological records from the time, one can only speculate on what the temperature would have been inside Jesus' tomb. But even if it were cold inside the tomb, Jesus' corpse still would have been unrecognizable after seven weeks of decomposition. Again, I contacted Nernoff, but this time I asked him to suppose that the average temperature was 45 degrees Fahrenheit. Nernoff stated that even that temperature could not entirely prevent decomposition of the body; molds and some bacteria grow at that temperature. Furthermore, additional changes in appearance would be caused by dessication (drying), rigor and its relaxation, and settling of blood in the dependent tissues.[119] So even if we assume that Jesus' corpse had been kept cool, seven weeks is still plenty of time for the corpse to become decomposed and disfigured. Indeed, in the Jewish Midrash, we find a passage stating that the facial features of a corpse become disfigured in three days:

> Bar Kappara taught: Until three days [after death] the soul keeps on returning to the grave, thinking that it will go back [into the body]; but when it sees that *the facial features have become disfigured*, it departs and abandons [the body].[120]

Given this disfigurement, the Midrash is emphatic that the identity of a corpse can only be confirmed within *three days* of death. The Midrash cites the following statement from the Mishnah:

> You cannot testify to [the identity of a corpse] save by the facial features together with the nose, *even if there are marks of identification in his body and garments: again, you can testify only within three days {of death}*.[121]

Thus, attempting to identify a corpse more than three days after death would have had no standing in Jewish law.

But suppose a member of the Sanhedrin attempted to identify Jesus' corpse anyway. Would there have been any identifying marks that would have enabled identification? Presumably, Jesus' body would have had the telltale remnants of his crucifixion, including nails (or holes where the nails had been) and unbroken legs. This may have made identification possible. On the other hand, we don't know how many other victims of crucifixion were buried in the graveyard of the condemned, and we don't know when the disciples learned the location of the second tomb. For all we know antecedently, the disciples may not have learned the location of the second tomb until they proclaimed the resurrection. Thus, even if a Sanhedrist had unearthed Jesus' body, it is far from certain the disciples would know that it was Jesus' body.

Third, suppose, for the sake of argument, that the Jews took the claim of resurrection seriously, violated the tomb, removed the body, and paraded the rotting corpse of Jesus "through the streets of the city for all to see." It is doubtful that such disconfirming evidence would have "nipped the Christian heresy in the bud." For all we know, the early Christians would have denied that the body was Jesus, or they would have found some way to explain it away, perhaps by modifying their doctrines directly.[122] Indeed, one could plausibly argue that *Craig himself* is an example of a Christian whose faith in the resurrection is impervious to disconfirming historical evidence. Elsewhere, Craig writes, "Should a conflict arise between the witness of the Holy Spirit to the fundamental truth of the Christian faith and beliefs based on argument and evidence, then it is the former which must take precedence over the latter, not vice versa."[123] It is unclear why first-century Christians could not have engaged in a similar rationalization had, say, the Jews produced Jesus' corpse.

Therefore, in light of the above considerations, the preaching of the Resurrection in Jerusalem does not make it probable that the tomb was empty.

1.9. DOES JEWISH PROPAGANDA PROVIDE INDEPENDENT CONFIRMATION OF THE EMPTY TOMB STORY?

Craig's ninth argument for the historicity of the empty tomb is that Jewish polemic (in Matthew 28:15) presupposes the empty tomb. Craig writes, "Jewish opponents of Christianity . . . charged that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body."[124] However, that Jewish explanation presupposes the historicity of the empty tomb. Although the Jews could have denied the historicity of the empty tomb, they instead chose to explain it away. Thus, Craig argues, Jewish polemic provides independent confirmation of the "highest quality" for the empty tomb story "since it comes not from the Christians but from the very enemies of the early Christian faith."[125]

The historicity of the Jewish polemic should not be assumed, however. For all we know, the Jewish polemic may be a literary device designed to answer obvious doubts that would occur to converts. Or, supposing that there is some sort of historical basis to the polemic, it may be that the polemic originated with a non-Jew and then later Matthew attributed the polemic to the Jews. Given that the polemic is not recorded in any contemporary Jewish documents, we can't assume that Jews actually responded to the proclamation of the Resurrection with the accusation that the disciples stole the body.

But suppose, for the sake of argument, the Jewish polemic is historical. In that case, is there any reason to think the Jews actually accepted the Christian claim of the empty tomb? Craig assumes that the Jews would have accepted the empty tomb story only after verifying it for themselves.[126] But this assumption is multiply flawed.

First, there is no evidence that Jewish knowledge of the empty tomb presupposed by the polemic was based upon direct, firsthand evidence of an empty tomb. This is especially problematic because the date of the Jewish polemic is uncertain. For all we know, the polemic may not be earlier than 70 CE when the first known story of the empty tomb, Mark, was written.[127] By 70, Jerusalem had been sacked and the body had decomposed, so no one could really "check the tomb." Carnley presses this point well:

> there would have been no alternative for Jewish polemicists than to concede the possibility of the bare fact of the grave's emptiness and then go on

> to point out that, in any event, the emptiness of the grave, even if it could be demonstrated, would not prove anything more than that the body had been stolen or deliberately removed by the followers of Jesus themselves.[128]

As Davis admits, if the empty tomb story was not invented until during or after the Jewish war, "[b]y that time the location of the tomb could have been forgotten and verification would have been difficult."[129]

In direct response to this objection, Craig counters that there is a "tradition history" behind Matthew's story of the guard at the tomb,[130] which he reconstructs as follows:

> Christian: 'The Lord is risen!'
> Jew: 'No, his disciples stole away his body.'
> Christian: 'The guard at the tomb would have prevented any such theft.'
> Jew: 'No, his disciples stole away his body while the guard slept.'
> Christian: 'The chief priests bribed the guard to say this.'[131]

But Craig assumes without argument that the Jewish polemic arose *directly* in response to the initial Christian proclamation of the resurrection, rather than in response to the later *story* of the empty tomb. And the issue is when the Jews knew the *story* of the empty tomb. For all we know, the Jewish polemic did not arise until after the first detailed story of the empty tomb. So the date of the Jewish polemic is still uncertain and therefore the polemic does not increase the likelihood of the empty tomb story.

Second, Jewish polemic was just that—polemic. Polemical rumors need neither a basis in historical fact nor even sincere belief among those who spread them. An analogy should make this point clear. The claim that first-century Jews accepted the empty tomb story is akin to the claim that Romans and Jews "presupposed" that Joseph was not Jesus' father because Mary had conceived Jesus with a Roman soldier named Panthera. Just as no scholar uses Celsus and the *Talmud* as evidence for the claim, "Joseph didn't father Jesus," there is no reason to believe that Jews actually believed their polemic. The Jewish polemic is clearly a response to whatever Christians said at the time, a tit-for-tat counter to the Christian claim of an empty tomb. Thus, the Jewish polemic should be understood as a *hypothetical* response to the empty tomb story: "Even if we assume for the sake of argument that Jesus' tomb was empty, how do we know the disciples didn't steal the body?"

In the absence of evidence that the Jewish polemic was based upon an independent knowledge of the alleged empty tomb, the polemic cannot count as *independent* confirmation of the empty tomb story, even if it is hostile.

1.10. JESUS' TOMB WAS NOT VENERATED AS A SHRINE

Finally, Craig argues the absence of veneration for Jesus' burial place is evidence that the tomb was empty. Although the graves of prophets and holy men were typically venerated as a shrine, there is no evidence that this happened with Jesus' burial place. If Jesus was resurrected from the dead, there would have been no reason for the disciples to have venerated Jesus' tomb as a shrine. Thus, Craig argues, the reason that Jesus' burial place was not venerated is that it was empty.[132]

But is it really probable that Jesus' burial place was not venerated as a shrine? I, for one, am undecided; I have yet to find a good argument for that conclusion in any of the secondary literature on the Resurrection. Turning to Craig's argument on the matter, Craig is once again arguing from silence. From the premise that we have no evidence of veneration, Craig moves to the conclusion that there was no veneration. Now, even if Jesus' burial place had been venerated before the sack of Jerusalem in 70, it is far from obvious that we would have evidence of that today. And Craig provides no reason to believe that we would have such evidence. So Craig's argument for the absence of veneration is at best incomplete. I do not want to rest my rejection of Craig's argument on that point alone, however, as many critics accept Craig's assumption.[133] Therefore, in the rest of this section, I shall assume that Jesus' burial place was not venerated. Instead, I want to focus on Craig's claim that the reason for this lack of veneration is that Jesus' grave was empty.

Let's divide Christians into two groups, the "earliest" Christians and "later" Christians.[134] The "earliest" Christians are those who had known Jesus before his death and who thought they had "seen" Jesus risen from the dead. "Later" Christians, on the other hand, had not known Jesus before his death and had not "seen" him risen from the dead. Later Christians clearly had a motive to venerate the tomb as a shrine, as demonstrated by veneration of the Holy Sepulchre Church, centuries after the Jewish War.[135]

As for the "earliest" Christians, it seems to me that the lack of veneration is neutral. As Craig correctly points out, if the remains of a prophet were

not in a tomb, the site would lose its religious value and significance as a shrine, and hence would make a lack of veneration prima facie probable.[136] On the other hand, we would *also* expect a lack of veneration in the event of a dishonorable burial for a condemned criminal. Under Jewish law, there was no mourning for condemned criminals. Moreover, the burial place for a condemned criminal was considered, above all else, *shameful.* Thus, we would expect a lack of veneration, at least until the burial place was no longer remembered as a place of shame.[137] So the fact that Jesus' tomb was not venerated is antecedently no more likely on the assumption that Jesus' tomb was empty than on the assumption that Jesus was buried dishonorably.

Thus, Craig has not shown that the lack of veneration of Jesus' grave is more probable on the assumption that the empty tomb story is historical than on the assumption that Jesus was (ultimately) buried in a common grave. Greg Herrick, an Evangelical who generally accepts Craig's arguments for the historicity of the empty tomb story, admits, "Personally, I do not find this thesis probable. It is at best a corroboratory argument for the empty tomb."[138]

2. CONCLUSION

When taken individually, then, none of Craig's ten lines of evidence shows that the empty tomb *story* is probably historical. But perhaps Craig's ten lines of evidence could be used to construct a cumulative case for the historicity of the story. Craig himself makes it quite clear that he does not (now?) use such an approach in arguing for the Resurrection (or, presumably, for the empty tomb story alone); instead, he says, he relies on inference to the best explanation.[139] And according to Craig, "It is no part of inference to the best explanation that the hypothesis is rendered probable by the cumulative weight of considerations, which, taken individually, do not make the hypothesis probable."[140] Nevertheless, it would be useful to consider whether such an approach to the historicity of the story would fare any better than Craig's.

On a cumulative case approach, an apologist might admit that none of Craig's ten lines of evidence makes the historicity of the story more probable than not. Yet that same apologist could consistently argue that collectively his ten lines of evidence *do* show the story is probably historical. But in that case, the cumulative case apologist must actually show Craig's various lines

of evidence taken together yield a higher probability for the story than when his arguments are taken in isolation.

Furthermore, in Swinburne's terminology, it's far from clear that such a cumulative case would constitute a correct P-inductive argument.[141] In other words, it is unclear why such a cumulative case would yield a probability greater than 0.5. As Craig writes, "[U]nless the Christian apologist is able to make his individual probabilities high enough, there is the real danger that they may sum to less than 0.5,"[142] in which case the claim at hand (in this case the historicity of the story) would be *probably false.*

But if Craig does not rely on a cumulative case approach to defend historical claims, how does he determine the best historical explanation? He employs the criteria delineated by C. Behan McCullagh in his book, *Justifying Historical Descriptions.*[143] When Craig employs McCullagh's criteria, he is concerned with determining the best historical explanation for the relevant facts, of which the empty tomb is only one. Craig's resurrection hypothesis is designed to explain all of the relevant data. In contrast, my relocation hypothesis is designed to explain *only* the fact of the empty tomb. I have not attempted to assess whether the relocation hypothesis, whether by itself or in conjunction with an auxiliary hypothesis, provides the best explanation for all of the relevant data. Obviously, a complete assessment of the resurrection hypothesis requires an assessment of *all* the relevant data; the remainder of the data has been addressed by the other contributors to this book. Nevertheless, I think it useful to isolate the fact of the empty tomb and ask which hypothesis provides the better historical explanation for that fact alone. If the relocation hypothesis provides a better explanation of the empty tomb than the resurrection hypothesis, then that result would surely be relevant to assessing the explanatory power of the resurrection hypothesis and hence to assessing the success of the resurrection hypothesis as a whole. By way of summary, then, I would like to compare Craig's hypothesis with my own, focusing on facts directly relevant to the burial of Jesus and the subsequent emptiness of the tomb.

1. *Implication of observation statements.* The empty tomb can be deduced from the relocation hypothesis. In contrast, the resurrection hypothesis does not *entail* an empty tomb. *By itself*, the resurrection hypothesis tells us nothing about whether there was an empty tomb, since the resurrection hypothesis is compatible with a wide variety of auxiliary hypotheses con-

cerning the status of Jesus' corpse between the time of his death and the time of his alleged resurrection. For example, the resurrection hypothesis is compatible with the auxiliary hypothesis that the Romans denied Joseph of Arimathea permission to bury Jesus, and instead let Jesus' corpse rot on the cross. Only if we combine the resurrection hypothesis with one or more auxiliary hypotheses, like Jesus' honorable burial, can we deduce an empty tomb.[144]

2. *Explanatory scope.* Each hypothesis explains additional facts besides the report that the tomb was empty. The resurrection hypothesis explains the prominence of women in the story, the preaching of the resurrection in Jerusalem, Jewish polemic, and the lack of veneration of Jesus' tomb as a shrine. But the relocation hypothesis *also* explains these facts. Moreover, the relocation hypothesis explains other facts as well: why the burial was rushed; why the body was not anointed on Friday; why a Sanhedrist stored the corpse of a criminal in his own family tomb; and the lack of veneration of Jesus' tomb. The relocation hypothesis therefore has greater explanatory scope.

3. *Explanatory power.* Although the resurrection hypothesis can be conjoined with an auxiliary hypothesis in order to guarantee an empty tomb, the possibility of such a combination is not of obvious relevance to my comparison of the explanatory power of the resurrection and relocation hypotheses. For that assessment compares relocation to resurrection, not to resurrection combined with the honorable burial hypothesis. The relevant issue is whether an empty tomb is just as probable given resurrection as it is given relocation, not whether the resurrection hypothesis, with the assistance of an auxiliary hypothesis, can explain an empty tomb as well as the relocation hypothesis. Since the relocation hypothesis entails an empty tomb whereas the resurrection hypothesis does not, it follows that an empty tomb is antecedently less probable on the assumption of resurrection than on the assumption of relocation, and therefore the relocation hypothesis has greater explanatory power.

4. *Plausibility.* The relocation hypothesis is clearly plausible in light of our background knowledge: it is highly likely that the Romans would have approved a request from the Sanhedrin to bury Jesus; it is highly likely that a representative of the Sanhedrin would have made such a request; and it is highly likely that that same representative would have buried Jesus in the graveyard of the condemned. In contrast, the plausibility of the resurrection hypothesis depends upon very controversial views about the existence and

nature of God.[145] Moreover, if the resurrection hypothesis is conjoined with the honorable burial hypothesis, it becomes even less plausible, since it is highly unlikely that a criminal would have been buried in the family grave of a Sanhedrist. Since the relocation hypothesis does not require such assumptions, the relocation hypothesis is more plausible than the resurrection hypothesis.

5. *Ad hoc-ness.* Although Craig claims that the resurrection hypothesis requires only one new supposition,[146] I think it is obvious that many more suppositions are needed. The resurrection hypothesis also requires us to suppose that God would become incarnate, allow Jesus to be crucified, and then desire to raise Jesus from the dead.[147] Moreover, the honorable burial hypothesis requires another new supposition: that a prominent member of the Sanhedrin would not bury a condemned criminal like Jesus in the criminals' graveyard. In contrast, the relocation hypothesis requires none of these dubious assumptions, and is therefore less ad hoc than the resurrection hypothesis.

6. *Disconfirmation.* None of the specific evidence disconfirms the relocation hypothesis. And although it might seem that the explanation provided in Mark 16:6 is incompatible with the relocation hypothesis, the relocation hypothesis can explain the Markan story of the empty tomb. If Jesus had been relocated to the criminals' graveyard, this would have been embarrassing to early Christians. The author of Mark would want to deny that such a thing had happened to Jesus.[148]

7. *Relative superiority.* The relocation hypothesis is clearly superior to the resurrection hypothesis according to the other criteria. It is plausible; has much greater explanatory scope; it is not ad hoc; and it is not disconfirmed by accepted beliefs. However, the relocation hypothesis does not so far exceed its rivals that there is little chance of a rival hypothesis exceeding it in meeting these conditions. It would not take much specific counterevidence —such as a first-century Jewish text specifying that a criminal like Jesus did not have to be buried in the criminals' graveyard, combined with an account by Joseph of Arimathea himself stating he was a sympathizer of Jesus—to make the honorable burial hypothesis more acceptable than the relocation hypothesis. Nevertheless, such evidence does not exist. On the other hand, we lack *direct* evidence for the relocation hypothesis. According to McCullagh's methodology, then, we should suspend judgment on it.[149]

In short, there are strong, *historical* grounds for rejecting Craig's arguments for the empty tomb story. And this would be the case even if there

exists a God capable of raising Jesus from the dead.[150] In the absence of inductively correct arguments for or against the historicity of the empty tomb story, I suggest that the historian *qua* historian should be agnostic about the matter.[151]

NOTES

1. The present chapter is a significant revision of "Historical Evidence and the Empty Tomb Story: A Reply to William Lane Craig," which appeared in the *Journal of Higher Criticism* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 251–93.

2. See his "The Bodily Resurrection" in *Gospel Perspectives I*, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1980), pp. 47–74; "The Empty Tomb of Jesus," in *Gospel Perspectives II: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels*, ed. R.T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1981), pp. 173–200; "The Guard at the Tomb," *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984): 273–81; "The Historicity of the Empty Tomb of Jesus," *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985): 39–67; *The Historical Argument for the Resurrection of Jesus*, Texts and Studies in Religion 23 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1985); *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 16 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1989); "On Doubts About the Resurrection," *Modern Theology* 6 (1989): 53–75; *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), pp. 272–80; "Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?" in *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), pp. 147–82; with Robert Greg Cavin, *Dead or Alive: A Resurrection Debate* (audiocassette; Irvine, CA: Integrated Resources, 1995); "John Dominic Crossan on the Resurrection of Jesus" in *The Resurrection*, ed. Stephen Davis, David Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 249–71; "The Empty Tomb of Jesus," in *In Defense of Miracles*, ed. Doug Geivett and Gary Habermas (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), pp. 247–61; with John Dominic Crossan, *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up? A Debate between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan*, ed. Paul Copan (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998); with Robert M. Price, *The Craig-Price Debate: Did Jesus Rise From the Dead?* (audiocassette; Columbus: Ohio State University Veritas Forum, 1999); and with Gerd Lüdemann, *Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Figment?* ed. Paul Copan and Ronald K. Tacelli (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000).

3. See Evan Fales, "Successful Defense? A Review of *In Defense of Miracles*," *Philosophia Christi* 2, no. 3 (2001): 7–35; Keith M. Parsons, "The Universe Is Probable; the Resurrection Is Not," in *Does God Exist? The Craig-Flew Debate*, ed. Stan W. Wallace (Hants, UK: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 115–30; Robert J. Miller, *The Jesus Seminar and Its Critics* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 1999); and Richard C. Carrier, "Craig's Empty Tomb and Habermas on the Post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus," *The Secular Web*, 1999, http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/richard_carrier/indef/4e.html; and Robert M. Price's chapter, "By This Time He

Stinketh: The Attempts of William Lane Craig to Exhume Jesus." Cf. G. A. Wells, *The Jesus Myth* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1999); idem, *A Resurrection Debate: The New Testament Evidence in Evangelical and in Critical Perspective* (London: Rationalist Press Association, 1988), also available online at http://www.infidels.org/ library/modern/g_a_wells/resurrection.html; Gerd Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology* (London: SCM, 1994); and Michael Martin, *The Case Against Christianity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).

4. Craig, "Did Jesus Rise?" pp. 146, 152.

5. Craig says that when arguing for the historicity of the resurrection, he makes an inference to the best explanation. Presumably he does so when he argues for the historicity of the empty tomb as well. See Craig, *Jesus' Resurrection*, p. 179.

6. On Craig's acceptance of the view that Joseph buried Jesus *honorably,* see ibid., p. 166.

7. Craig, *Accessing the New Testament*, p. 175.

8. Craig, "Did Jesus Rise?" p. 148; Craig, *Jesus' Resurrection*, p. 167n9.

9. Craig, *Jesus' Resurrection*, p. 161.

10. John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately After the Execution of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1998), p. 542.

11. Gerard Stephen Sloyan, *The Crucifixion of Jesus: History, Myth, Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 18.

12. Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 86–88.

13. Bryon McCane, *Roll Back the Stone: Death and Burial in the World of Jesus* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2003), p. 90.

14. Philo *In Flaccum* 83; Josephus *Life* 420–21; Plutarch *Antonius* 2; Cicero *Orationes Phillippicae* 2.7.17–18. For a comprehensive survey of references to Roman crucifixion, see Hengel, *Crucifixion*.

15. Deut. 21:22–23; Josephus *Jewish War* 4.317; John 19:31.

16. McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*, p. 91.

17. Josephus records several mass crucifixions, including a crucifixion by Varus of more than two thousand people at one time, and a crucifixion by Titus of hundreds. See Josephus *Antiquities* 17.10.10 (295); *Jewish War* 5.11.1 (450).

18. McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*, p. 91.

19. Plutarch *Antonius* 2; Josephus *Life* 420–21.

20. Philo *In Flaccum* 83. Although Philo mentions only the approach of a Roman holy day, Richard Carrier has argued convincingly that exceptions would have also been made for the approach of *Jewish* holy days. See Carrier's chapter, "The Burial of Jesus in Light of Jewish Law."

21. David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1956), p. 311.

22. See Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 47a–47b and the discussion in Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), p. 1210.

23. Mark 14:64.

24. Daube, *The New Testament*, p. 311. Daube is referring to Tosefta *Sanhedrin* 9.8.

25. F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* 5th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1960); and Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987).

26. E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (New York: Penguin, 1993), pp. 15–32.

27. Gerd Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology* (London: SCM, 1994), p.44.

28. Tosefta *Sanhedrin* 9:8; Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 6:5–7. See also the discussion in Thomas Sheehan, *The First Coming: How the Kingdom of God Became Christianity* (New York: Random House, 1986), pp. 254–55n10. Also available online at http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/thomas_sheehan/firstcoming/two.html#10. For a defense of the applicability of Rabbinic laws concerning burial to the early first century, see Carrier, "The Burial of Jesus in Light of Jewish Law," and McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*.

29. McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*, pp. 95–96.

30. See, for example, Craig, *Assessing the New Testament*, p. 175n22.

31. McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*.

32. I am grateful to Byron McCane for making me aware of these three points.

33. Ibid.

34. Sheehan, *The First Coming*, p. 254n10.

35. Lowder, "Historical Evidence," pp. 262–63.

36. Craig, *Assessing the New Testament*, p. 175.

37. McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*, p. 99.

38. Cf. Craig, *Jesus' Resurrection*, p. 168.

39. Craig, "Did Jesus Rise?" pp. 147–49.

40. Edward Lynn Bode, *The First Easter Morning* AB 45 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), p. 98.

41. Note that this possibility has nothing to do with a so-called spiritual resurrection. If Paul believed that Jesus was never buried, he still could have believed in a fleshly resurrection of Jesus by believing that Jesus' cross became unoccupied.

42. For a detailed discussion of the types of burial recognized by Jewish law, see Richard Carrier's chapter, "The Burial of Jesus in Light of Jewish Law."

43. Cf. Oscar Holtzmann, *The Life of Jesus*, trans. J. T. Bealby and Maurice A. Canney (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1904), p. 499.

44. Craig, "Did Jesus Rise?" p. 148.

45. Craig, *Assessing the New Testament*, p. 176; see also Craig, "Empty Tomb of Jesus (1997), p. 250.

46. Contrast with Craig, *Jesus' Resurrection*, p. 170, who writes, ". . . in the absence of any check by historical facts, alternative legendary accounts *can* arise simultaneously and independently" (my emphasis).

47. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, p. 272.

48. Cf. John 20:2.

49. Cf. Mark 5:21–43, John 11:1–44.

50. Matt. 28:15.

51. A. J. M. Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), p. 62.

52. Cf. John M. G. Barclay, "The Resurrection in Contemporary New Testament Scholarship" in *Resurrection Reconsidered*, ed. Gavin D'Costa (Oxford: Oneworld, 1996), p. 23.

53. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, p. 280.

54. Cf. Richard Carrier's chapter, "The Plausibility of Theft," and J. Duncan M. Derrett's chapter, "Financial Aspects of the Resurrection" for detailed discussions of the theft hypothesis.

55. E.g., Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, pp. 295–98; Craig, "Did Jesus Rise?" pp. 163–65; Craig, *Will the Real Jesus?* pp. 159–67; Craig, *Jesus' Resurrection*, pp. 184–85.

56. Uta Ranke-Heinemann, *Putting Away Childish Things*, trans. Peter Heinegg (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), p. 131. Cf. G. W. H. Lampe, "Easter: A Statement" in *The Resurrection*, ed. William Purcell (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 43.

57. Craig, *Assessing the New Testament*, p. 86.

58. Ibid., pp. 112–14.

59. C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*, 3rd ed. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1967), p. 26.

60. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, p. 275.

61. Craig, *Jesus' Resurrection*, p. 164. For a critique of the existence of a pre-Markan passion story, see Werner H. Kelber, ed., *The Passion in Mark: Studies on Mark 14–16* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); and Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 115. For a summary of the state of the question, see Marion L. Soards, "The Question of a Premarcan Passion Narrative," in *The Death of the Messiah*, vol. 2, ed. Raymond E. Brown (New York: Doubleday, 1994), pp. 1492–1524.

62. See J. B. Green, *The Death of Jesus*, WUNT 2, no. 33 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1988): 311–13; A. Yarbro Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Probings of Mark in Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), p. 117; *idem*, "The Genre of the Passion Narrative," *Studia Theologica* 47, no. 1 (1993): 18–19, all of which are referenced in Paul Rhodes Eddy, "Response" in *The Resurrection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 276n8.

63. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, p. 117.

64. Craig, *Assessing the New Testament*, pp. 198–99; Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, p. 274.

65. Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Vintage, 1979), pp. xiii–27.

66. Cf. Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 115.

67. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, p. 117.

68. Craig, *Assessing the New Testament*, p. 198.

69. If one accepts the authenticity of Luke 8:2, that verse suggests that Mary Magdalene may have been mentally ill. And if that were the case, then her testimony would not even be prima facie evidence for the historicity of the empty tomb, even if Mary was completely in sound mind at the time of her testimony to the resurrection. But I do not want to place much weight on this point, since the authenticity of Luke 8:2 is questionable and since it is not even clear that Mary Magdalene was in fact one of the female witnesses listed in the pre-Markan passion source (assuming there was one).

70. Craig, *Assessing the New Testament*, p. 361.

71. Ibid., p. 86.

72. Ibid., p. 363.

73. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, p. 275.

74. "The Historicity of the Empty Tomb of Jesus," Kirby's World, 2001, http://home.earthlink.net/~kirby/xtianity/tomb/rebuttal2.html.

75. Craig, *Assessing the New Testament*, p. 363.

76. Mark 15:42–47; cf. 16:1.

77. Stephen T. Davis, *Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), p. 71.

78. Craig, "Did Jesus Rise?" p. 151.

79. Cf. Craig, *Jesus' Resurrection*, p. 174.

80. Cf. Mark 15:39, which uses the Christological title, "Son of God." It isn't clear why Mark would need to repeat this title later in the empty tomb story.

81. Cf. Craig, *Jesus' Resurrection*, p. 174: "There is no reason to think that the [Markan empty tomb] tradition ever lacked the angel."

82. Bode, *First Easter Morning*, p. 28. Italics are mine.

83. Craig, "On Doubts," p. 59; cf. Craig, *Assessing the New Testament*, pp. 222–25. For a defense of identifying Mark's "young man" as an angel, see Bode, *First Easter Morning*, p. 27.

84. Cf. Eleonore Stump, "Visits to the Sepulcher and Biblical Exegesis," *Faith and Philosophy* 6 (1989): 377n19.

85. Bode, *First Easter Morning*, p. 166.

86. Ibid., p. 167. Bode also objects that the angelic appearance is opposed to the rejection of the angel's message by Luke, and the tradition that the apostles were commissioned directly by the Lord.

87. Ibid.

88. Craig, "Did Jesus Rise?" p. 151.

89. If women could not serve as legal witnesses and yet they were supposed to serve as legal witnesses in the various accounts of the empty tomb, then why would the disciples be portrayed (in Luke and John) as taking their claim seriously enough to warrant an investigation?

90. J. P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987), p. 168. Italics are mine.

91. John Wenham, *Easter Enigma: Are the Resurrection Accounts in Conflict?* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), pp. 150–51n26.

92. See *Jewish War* 7.389 and 4.81, respectively.

93. Pliny the Younger *Epistles* 10.96.

94. Although it might initially seem that Celsus, in his *On the True Doctrine,* attacked the Christian belief for being founded on the testimony of women, this is a questionable interpretation. Concerning the appearance of a resurrected Jesus with wounds from his crucifixion still visible, Celsus asks, "Who beheld this? A *half-frantic woman,* as you state, and some other one, perhaps, of those who were engaged in the same system of *delusion*, who had either dreamed so, owing to a *peculiar state of mind*, or under the influence of a *wandering imagination*

had formed to himself an appearance according to his own wishes." In light of Luke 8:2, Celsus may have been referring to Mary's history of mental illness. In any case, there is no evidence that Celsus ever attacked the empty tomb story because it rested on the testimony of women. See Origen *Contra Celsum* 2,59f. Cf. Graham Stanton, "Early Objections to the Resurrection of Jesus," in *Resurrection: Essays in Honour of Leslie Houlden*, ed. Stephen Barton and Graham Stanton (London: SPCK, 1994), pp. 79–94.

95. Craig, *Assessing the New Testament*, p. xvii.

96. Ibid., pp. 229–30.

97. Ibid. Italics are mine.

98. Craig, *Jesus' Resurrection*, p. 175.

99. Ibid.; Bode, *First Easter Morning*, pp. 37–39.

100. Craig, *Assessing the New Testament*, p. 368. On the identification of the Beloved Disciple as John the son of Zebedee, Howard Clark Kee remarks that "there is no evidence that this [identification] is accurate." Furthermore, one need not postulate the reminiscences of an eyewitness in order to explain the origin of the tradition. Gerd Lüdemann points out that the tradition can also be explained as having been authored by "either Luke himself or—more probably—one of the traditions which he used." See Howard Clark Kee, *The Cambridge Annotated Study Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 81; and Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 139.

101. Ibid.

102. E.g., Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 212–17; Robert Mahoney, *Two Disciples at the Tomb* (Bern: P. Lang, 1974), pp. 41–69; Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 969, 1000; and H. von Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1958), p. 35n139 (referenced in Reginald H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* [New York: Macmillan, 1971], p. 103).

103. Cf. Brown, *Gospel According to John*, p. 1000 who writes, "for the original composer of ch. xxiv did not know that the 'some of those who were with us' included Simon Peter."

104. Again, cf. Brown, who argues that Luke 24:24 "constitutes an independent witness to the story of a visit to the empty tomb by the disciples."

105. Stump, "Visits to the Sepulcher," p. 367.

106. For recent defenses or affirmations of the verse's authenticity by liberal scholars, see Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 139; Gregory J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: Thomas and John in Controversy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 81n40; Barnabas Lindars, "The Resurrection and the Empty Tomb," in *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, ed. Paul Avis (London: Darton, Longmann, & Todd, 1993), p. 134n1.

107. Incidentally, critics of the story of the disciples' visit to the tomb need not assume the story was invented to "shore up the [allegedly] weak witness of the women" (Craig, *Assessing the New Testament*, p. 246). Although the disciples initially thought the women's story was "an idle tale" (Luke 24:11), what was "idle" about their story was not the fact that women were telling it. Rather, what was "idle" was their report (John 20:2) that Jesus' body had been

removed. ("They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.") Lüdemann points out that the origin of the tradition can be explained as a harmonization of the Markan empty tomb story with a tradition of the first appearance to Peter (cf. Luke 24:34). As Lüdemann explains, "The author's idea could then have been that if the women reported that the tomb was empty and if Jesus appeared to Cephas, he must himself have been convinced of the empty tomb and therefore must have gone there." See Lüdemann, *What Really Happened to Jesus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), p. 37. Cf. Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 139; Peter Carnley, *The Structure of Resurrection Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 19; Fuller, *Formation*, p. 103.

108. Bode, *First Easter Morning*, p. 171.

109. Ibid., p. 172.

110. Craig, "Did Jesus Rise?" p. 152.

111. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, pp. 276–77.

112. Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), p. xiv.

113. The text of Josephus' *Antiquities* (18.3.3 § 63–64) might seem to contain an authentic reference to Jesus' resurrection, but there are clear signs of Christian tampering with the text. Moreover, even the New Testament does not claim that the Jews ever bothered to check the tomb.

114. Martin, *Case Against Christianity*, p. 91.

115. Indeed, one cannot help but notice a parallel between first-century Jews' interest in refuting the Resurrection and contemporary New Testament scholars' interest in refuting apologetic arguments for the empty tomb. In the course of writing this paper, I contacted for peer review several New Testament scholars who reject the empty tomb story. Few felt apologetic arguments were worth serious consideration. One prominent critic thought it was a "waste of time" to provide a detailed response to Craig. Another exegete criticized me for taking apologists like Craig "too seriously"! One cannot help but wonder if first-century Jews held a similar view. Cf. Craig Blomberg's complaint that liberal scholars have ignored theological studies by Evangelicals. According to Blomberg, "In fact, the wealth of detailed, nuanced evangelical scholarship that writers of Crossan's bent simply ignore altogether is astonishing." See Blomberg, "The Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith: Harmony or Conflict?" in *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?* ed. Paul Copan (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), p. 111.

116. Gerald Bostock, "Do We Need an Empty Tomb?" *The Expository Times* 105 (1994): 204.

117. John Nernoff III to Jeffery Jay Lowder, October 1999.

118. Craig, *Assessing the New Testament*, p. 204.

119. John Nernoff III to Jeffery Jay Lowder, November 7, 2000.

120. Midrash Rabbah Genesis C:7 (994).

121. Mishnah *Yebamot* 16:3a–e. Cf. Midrash Rabbah Genesis 65:20 (595); Midrash Rabbah Genesis 73:5 (669–70); Midrash Rabbah Leviticus 18:1 (225–26); and Midrash Rabbah Leviticus 33:5.

122. Cf. Richard Carrier's chapter, "The Plausibility of Theft," in the present volume.

123. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, p. 36. Commenting on Craig's position, Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection*, p. 252n29 writes, "Such absolutist claims for the Spirit seem to me to be dangerous in the extreme. How can one be so sure that it is the Spirit that convinces one of this truth (rather than, say, one's own preferences or wishful thinking)?" For a detailed critique of Craig's epistemology, see Michael Martin, "Craig's Holy Spirit Epistemology," *The Secular Web*, 1998, http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/michael_martin/holy_spirit.html.

124. Craig, "Did Jesus Rise?" p. 152.

125. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, p. 277.

126. I want to emphasize I am not challenging the idea that the Jews could not have *believed* Jesus was resurrected from the dead unless they *believed* there was an empty tomb. As I mentioned in 1.2, even Craig himself recognizes the distinction between *believing* there was an empty tomb and *knowing* it. My point is that Jews could have believed there was an empty tomb without verifying it for themselves (and hence knowing it).

127. Though inconclusive, it is also worth noting that the absence of the polemic in the Markan account is consistent with the polemic originating *after* Mark.

128. Carnley, *The Structure of Resurrection Belief*, p. 56.

129. Davis, *Risen Indeed*, p. 74.

130. Craig, "Empty Tomb of Jesus (1997), p. 258.

131. Craig, *Assessing the New Testament*, p. 207.

132. Ibid., p. 372.

133. E.g., Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection*, pp. 63–65; Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 45; and Carnley, *Structure of Resurrection Belief*, p. 58.

134. I owe this distinction to Robert Greg Cavin, in private correspondence about his forthcoming book *Double Cross: A Logical Approach to the Mystery of Easter* (coauthored with Carlos A. Colombetti).

135. John M. G. Barclay, "The Resurrection in Contemporary New Testament Scholarship," in *Resurrection Reconsidered*, ed. Gavin D'Costa (Oxford: Oneworld, 1996), p. 23.

136. On the assumption that Jesus was resurrected, I believe that the support provided by this evidence for the empty tomb is weakened, since the absence of his bones from the tomb would be due to the resurrection, a special circumstance if there was ever one. As Wedderburn asks, "Was that not in itself reason enough to note and remember and cherish the site, regardless of whether it contained Jesus' remains or not"? See Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection*, p. 64.

137. McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*, p. 106. Cf. Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection*, p. 64; Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*), p. 208n207; Carnley, *Structure of Resurrection Belief*, p. 58; Küng, p. 371.

138. Greg Herrick, "The Historical Veracity of the Resurrection Narratives," Biblical Studies Foundation, 1998, http://www.bible.org/docs/theology/christ/hisjesus.htm.

139. Contrast with Craig, *Assessing the New Testament*, p. 373: "*Taken together* these ten considerations seem to furnish good evidence that the tomb of Jesus was actually found empty . . ." (italics are mine).

140. William Lane Craig, "A Classical Apologist's Response" in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), p. 179.

141. Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 15–19.

142. Craig 2000b, p. 179.

143. Whether McCullagh's criteria are the best way to assess competing historical explanations is unclear and well beyond the scope of this paper. Robert Greg Cavin has pointed out to me a number of difficulties with McCullagh's criteria (and Craig's application of these criteria). Nevertheless, since Craig has adopted McCullagh's methodology I thought it would be instructive to do so in this paper as well. If McCullagh's methodology ultimately turns out to be flawed, then so much the worse for Craig's historical apologetics. See C. Behan McCullagh, *Justifying Historical Descriptions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 19, 21–25.

144. Cavin, "A Logical Analysis and Critique of the Historical Argument for the Revivification of Jesus," paper presented at the Pacific Division meeting of the American Philosophical Association, San Francisco, California, April 1, 1995, p. 8. Cf. a similar logical point made by Paul Draper about multiverses, naturalism, and the fine-tuning argument in his essay, "Cosmic Fine-Tuning and Terrestrial Suffering: Parallel Problems for Naturalism and Theism," forthcoming.

145. See the chapters by Martin and Drange in the present volume.

146. Craig, "Did Jesus Rise?" p. 164.

147. See the chapters by Martin and Drange in the present volume.

148. Cf. section 1.5, where I mention Bode's reasons for rejecting the appearance of the "young man" as a legendary development.

149. McCullagh, *Justifying Historical Descriptions*, p. 25.

150. Paul Draper, "Craig's Case for God's Existence," in *Does God Exist? The Craig-Flew Debate*, ed. Stan W. Wallace (Hants, UK: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 141–54.

151. I am grateful to William Lane Craig, who engaged in private correspondence with me on numerous occasions to discuss various points in my paper. I am indebted to Richard Carrier, who graciously spent an enormous amount of time reviewing multiple drafts of this essay and who served as my tutor on Greek and ancient historiography. I am appreciative to editor Robert M. Price for advice on the paper as a whole. Finally, in alphabetical order, I have benefited greatly from the insightful, critical comments of Ed Babinski, Steve Baughman, Craig Blomberg, Steven Carr, Robert Greg Cavin, John Clark, John Dominic Crossan, Earl Doherty, Evan Fales, Michael Goulder, Shandon Guthrie, Steve Hays, James Keller, Peter Kirby, Doug Krueger, Jesse Kushin, Gerd Lüdemann, A. J. Mattill Jr., Paul Pardi, Keith Parsons, Bob Sarver, Thomas Sheehan, Todd B. Vick, Mark Vuletic, and G. A. Wells.

8

TAMING THE TEHOM:

THE SIGN OF JONAH IN MATTHEW

EVAN FALES

> Thou dost rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, thou stillest them. Thou didst crush Rahab like a carcass, thou didst scatter thy enemies with thy mighty arm. Ps. 89.9–10

SEARCH FOR A GENRE: ST. MATTHEW'S PASSION AS MYTH

It is a familiar feature of the Gospel passion narratives that virtually every major element of the story, in each of its differing versions, is anticipated in the Hebrew Bible (hereafter, HB)—so much so that one can virtually piece together that narrative from passages found in the Psalms, Zechariah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and elsewhere. This is for no Gospel more true than for Matthew's. It is not that Matthew produces a pastiche of HB narratives in composing his passion narrative, but it is clear that a close relationship exists between almost every theme of Matthew's passion and certain HB text(s).

For orthodox Christians, the explanation of this remarkable coincidence is, in essence, rather straightforward: the HB passages, reflecting God's foreknowledge and divine plan of salvation, serve as prefigurative or prophetic "hints."[1] They foreshadow the singular salvific act in which God, through the

sacrifice of his son Jesus, enters human history in the very way required to bring into the human sphere the effective workings of divine grace. To achieve this signal result, God carefully choreographed both Israelite history and the events surrounding Jesus' life; or at least, chose a historical setting which he foreknew would serve this purpose.

In view of the meaningful and close correspondences between the HB and the passion narratives—including explicit references to the HB—Matthew's use of one feature of the story of Jonah comes as something of a surprise. At Matthew 12.39–40, Jesus anticipates his passion, offering what is the most precise prediction in the NT of the chronology of his death and resurrection. As such, this verse ranks second only to his announcement of the *parousia* (especially at Matthew 16.27) as the most significant prophecy in Christian soteriology.

The surprise I wish to remark upon is not that Jesus should be able to make such a specific prophecy,[2] but that it appears to conflict strikingly with the chronology provided by Matthew's own narrative. For Jesus says that, just as Jonah was imprisoned for three days and three nights in the belly of the whale (κήτους), so too shall he be imprisoned for that period within "the heart of the earth [ἐν τῃ καρδίᾳ τής γής τρεις ήμέρας νύκτας]." Yet, Matthew's passion chronology, the most detailed of the Gospels, is quite explicit: Jesus dies at about 3 PM on a Friday, is buried by 6 PM, and has risen out of the tomb sometime near or before dawn (6 AM) on Sunday.[3]

In what follows, I shall be developing a solution to this puzzle, the puzzle created by the apparent contradiction in Matthew; and I shall argue that this solution fits the available data substantially better than other scholarly solutions that have been offered. But my broader purpose is to use this problem as a vehicle for discussing some much larger, and therefore more contentious, issues that surround biblical hermeneutics. I shall be arguing that a signal advantage of the solution I propose in explaining Matthew 12.39–40 is that it avoids convicting Matthew of an obvious contradiction; and by way of claiming that as an advantage, I shall have some things briefly to say about principles of interpretive charity.

Second, my solution makes central use of the idea that the passion narrative is a myth, and that certain techniques of myth analysis taken over from anthropology can provide powerful tools for understanding the Bible and, in particular, provide new and fundamental insights into the meaning of the

passion narratives.[4] This requires me to say something about the contested notion of myth, about the methods of myth analysis I employ, and about the highly controversial application of that category to seemingly historical passages in the Bible.

There is ample room for misunderstanding here. First, it should be remarked that the application of the category of myth to Biblical exegesis has a long (and somewhat checkered) history, dating at least to the eighteenth century.[5] In the first half of the twentieth century, the notion of myth was often employed by members of the *Religionsgeschichte* (History of Religions) School, which included Bultmann and Mowinckel. Some contemporary commentators, such as William Craig, dismiss myth approaches to NT studies as an old idea that has been tried and has failed. There is no space here to examine this suggestion; the following remarks will have to suffice.

First, it is perhaps overly smug to allege that the investigations of the *Religionsgeschichte* School led to failure. Thus, H. Boers has the following to say about the results achieved by this school of thought:

> The RGS's program of biblical interpretation never came to a conclusion; it was interrupted by the rise of dialectical theology, to which even such an eminent second-generation member as Bultmann was attracted. The misfortune of this for biblical scholarship is not that the answers of the RGS have been lost—to the contrary, they have been refined by sympathizers and opponents alike. The misfortune is rather that their questions have been forgotten without having been fully addressed.[6]

Second, these earlier scholars were operating with conceptions of myth that were largely, or entirely, uninformed by the work of anthropologists, and —in particular—by the work of Durkheim and Levi-Strauss which (see below) I draw heavily upon. Thus many of the criticisms leveled against the RGS approach simply miss the mark if brought against the use I make of the category of myth.

Third, many of those criticisms are mistaken or badly defended. Here I mention just three: (1) It is said that the genre of the Gospels is that of biography, on the strength of arguments that Acts is "clearly" a historical work, that Luke, continuous with Acts and declared by Luke 1.1–4 to be "historical," is therefore so as well, and that the other Gospels share the same genre as Luke. (2) The alleged Hellenistic mythical "parallels" to Gospel stories

are, allegedly, not good parallels at all. (3) The figure and ideology of Jesus are thoroughly rooted in "orthodox Judaism," which rejected Hellenistic religious ideas; hence neither Jesus nor his biographers would ever have borrowed Hellenistic themes.

As against these three claims, I assert (but do not here argue) that: (1) This assumes that the genres of biography/history and myth are distinct and can readily be distinguished. But they cannot; there are clear cases, but also a continuum in between. Are, e.g., the stories surrounding Robin Hood biography or myth? And—to give examples from the era in question—what of the "biographies" of Aesop, Pythagoras, and Apollonius of Tyana?[7] (2) Everything depends upon which similarities and differences are considered significant. The criteria employed here are typically tendentious and not well motivated, i.e., by any general conception of the nature of myth. (3) As N. T. Wright[8] and others have shown, there was no such thing in the first century as "orthodox" Judaism; there were Judaisms, with strong disagreements over their attitudes toward Hellenistic ideas. It is a complete illusion to imagine that the first-century Mediterranean world consisted of nations living in cultural and intellectual isolation. Furthermore, if he is anything, the Jesus of the Gospels is no traditional Jew, but an innovator and rebel against the Jewish establishment of his day.

In this connection, we may observe that the basic apologetic strategy of those who take the NT miracle accounts to reflect historical events is to use arguments to the best explanation. They compare the plausibility of the explanation that these accounts should be understood as records of eyewitness experiences of the events described, with the plausibility of more skeptical hypotheses.[9] The skeptical competitors generally fall under the headings of fraud and folly, and they can be further divided into those that imagine the early Christians to have been engaged in conscious deception, and those that would involve self-deception (hallucination, exaggerated memories, and the like). The apologetic strategy, then, is to argue that the skeptical hypotheses can all be eliminated as less likely than the literalist's understanding of the biblical texts.

Now, argument to the best explanation is a legitimate and often powerful way to reason about the unknown. But it is subject to one notable weakness: the strength of the argument depends upon the presumption that all eligible explanations have been considered. I do not for a moment believe that fraud-

and-folly hypotheses can be dismissed as less probable than the occurrence of miracles; but my purpose in this essay will not be to defend such hypotheses. Rather, I am going to offer an alternative that has not received serious consideration, either by apologists or by most skeptics: namely, that the NT texts must be understood in terms of the categories pertaining to myth, categories against which most apologetic arguments are impotent.[10]

The broadest theoretical issues are ones concerning general constraints on the interpretation of texts and concerning strategies appropriate to religious texts in particular. Let us, however, narrow our focus, first of all, to religious texts that have a narrative structure, that present stories whose content involves fantastic, bizarre, or extraordinary elements, and that appear straightforwardly to assert that content without explicit cues directing the reader to understand the story in nonliteral, figurative terms.

I shall call such texts simply "stories," leaving it open whether the intention (of the authors) is to retail genuine history, history intercalated with fabrication, history interlarded with figurative material intended to convey a conception of the significance of that history, myth that incorporates some historical setting or elements, or pure myth.

Before turning to the question of what might be meant by "myth," let us observe that such texts pose basic questions concerning how the reader is to appropriate them. In answering these questions, we will, of course, need to consider a full range of possible explanations for the shape of a text. Perhaps it *is* an unvarnished, accurate account of events—perhaps those amazing things really *did* happen as described. Or, perhaps the author(s) was lying (in which case the question of a motive must be raised). Or the author may have been deceived (either by others or by him or herself). Or a text—at least the more outlandish parts of it and perhaps other parts as well—may have been shaped by the intent to convey a true message, but in figurative terms. Or possibly not in figurative terms, but in literal ones which we have misunderstood or mistranslated.

This is not the place to tackle the question of miracles—what exactly they are, or whether and under what circumstances it would be rational to conclude that one has occurred. I shall therefore set aside the first possibility of the ones just mentioned: I think Hume was correct in arguing that no sensible person will accept a miracle report as veridical, except possibly on the basis of massive, verifiably independent testimony from verifiably competent witnesses.[11]

That leaves plenty of scope for the other possibilities. Which one is most plausible will, naturally, depend upon the case and the circumstances surrounding it. Hume was (with respect to religious miracle reports) decidedly partial to the fraud-and-folly approach to reading such texts. While there is certainly ample reason to acknowledge the significant contributions these vices make to religious belief (the operations of spirit mediums and some television evangelists being convenient modern examples), it is also apparent that Hume was insensitive to, or simply unaware of, the other possible interpretive strategies. I am going to argue that one such strategy can help us see what is going on in the Gospel passion narratives and in Jesus' prophetic anticipation at Matthew 12.39–40.

I hope to make a case for the view that Matthew's understanding of the death and resurrection of Jesus cannot be correctly understood unless we recognize that much of the language the Gospel uses is figurative, and that the message conveyed by the text is true—or at the least, not self-contradictory. I shall outline an interpretation that I believe offers the best explanation of the data we have—the best, indeed, *even if* we take seriously the possibility of miracles and of folly and fraud.[12]

THE GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY

One consideration that guides me is a principle of interpretive charity. It is not easy to formulate exactly the constraints under which this principle places the interpreter. Clearly, the constraints cannot be so stringent as to rule out deception and credulity from the start, for deceptions do occur, sometimes with dramatic success. On the other hand, we must temper the temptations of an appeal in this direction with the observation that if humans generally were *too* credulous—*too* uncritical, unable to learn from experience, unable to recognize contradictions, and so on—then they would not be able to survive at all, to say nothing of being capable of communication via a system of conventional symbols.

This rather thin observation gains the more bite, the greater the evidence we have that an author is deeply intelligent and has an audience which includes others of great intelligence whom he or she succeeds in convincing; that he or she has a serious purpose with much at stake; is sincere, and so on.

On the face of it, Matthew scores high on all these measures; in particular, we have overwhelming internal evidence of his intelligence—both in his literary skill and in the mastery he has over HB texts. And ditto, in good measure, for a significant portion of his readership over the span of the first couple of centuries of church history.

It is therefore prima facie unlikely that Matthew would have been guilty of so significant a blunder as to put into Jesus' mouth words seriously misapprehending the temporal duration of his engagement with the forces of evil in Sheol. Of course, maybe he (or Jesus, or God) understood or intended reference to Jonah's imprisonment in the whale to be merely a trope for Jesus' journey into the realm of death, and marshaled it as a rhetorical ornament in reply to the Pharisees despite the strict mismatch in chronologies.[13] But if, at least, God had intended Jonah's adventure to prefigure Christ's, it is hard to see why, considering its soteriological significance, he couldn't have arranged either for Jonah's captivity to have lasted a day and a half, or for Jesus' battle in Sheol to have lasted a full three. This in itself counts against a literal reading, whatever we may think of the possibility of prophecy or of resurrection.

It is one thing to suggest a tropological reading of this passage; another to say just how the trope is intended to work. The latter, naturally, requires reading in context, and requires further an understanding of the genre of this context. That genre, I claim, is myth, so I need to say a bit about the import of this designation, and about the tools I shall apply to an understanding of the genre.

I shall take myth to be a way of conceptualizing and articulating a theoretical understanding of (some features of) human existence in a fictionalized narrative form.[14] A myth may incorporate elements of the factual history of a community, but typically does so only insofar as these elements subserve theoretical or pedagogical ends. The (often true) theory a myth conveys may concern various matters, but in my opinion, the central and overarching purpose of religious myths (including those superficially about nature and the cosmos) is to understand, establish and charter, codify, and/or justify the social and institutional structures that govern the life of the community: that is, either to legitimate existing structures or to propose or legitimate a change to new ones. Thus, a paradigmatic example of a myth would be the social contract narrative that in various versions was employed by the social-contractarians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[15] The variants of that myth illus-

trate how a story can be adapted to serve different political agendas. But the storyline is too thin to exhibit well another characteristic feature of myths, namely, significant internal structure, and the way in which structural transformations can be used to convey different messages (or the same message in different ways). That will be discussed in the next section.

SUBSTANCE AND STRUCTURE, THEORIES AND TOOLS

In principle, a myth could be about almost anything. But it is religious myths that have, for over a century, exercised the hermeneutical imaginations of anthropologists, because they have been understood to evoke a kind of fervent belief and literal-minded devotion (in contrast to fables and morality tales, with their clearly parabolical intent), and have done so in spite of, or perhaps because of, their fantastical content. Also significant, of course, is the fact that every known culture has religious myths. What makes them a universal feature of human existence? And how do they originate?

My analysis of Matthew's passion narrative begins from a position articulated by Emile Durkheim.[16] According to Durkheim, religious myths originate in, and express, unconsciously felt social pressures (such as moral norms) and arrangements (such as social functions and institutional structures). They purport to explain the rituals, customs, and social practices of the culture in which they are at home. They do this by "projecting" social/political realities onto a realm of supranatural "persons"—deities, spirits, demons, and the like, whose behaviors and relationships mimic the structures of social existence, and who provide a source and authoritative backing for social norms.

Durkheim's account provides a natural explanation for several of the salient features of religious belief systems. It explains at a stroke their universality (all people need to understand and legitimate their social practices) and the nearly isomorphic mappings commonly found between the personae and doings of the supernatural pantheon and the institutions and processes of the social order. The two realms are, moreover, analogues with respect to their *properties* to a degree that can hardly be a matter of coincidence. For the Durkheimian, ruling gods are projections of nations, clans, tribes, and so on, minor gods, demigods, and angels are sovereign over or represent social func-

tions and institutions (war, agriculture, metalwork, marriage, and the like); and souls are projections of the social roles occupied by individuals. Like tribes, institutions, and social roles, gods, angels, and souls are nonmaterial and invisible; they supervene upon the natural order, they are "experienced" within human life as governing it and as the source of moral rules and legal authority; they are not spatial but pervade the social space via embodiment in various human individuals and artifacts, and so on.

High gods are ultimate sources of authority and (social) power, and often the creators of the lesser beings in the spirit world and of humans as persons occupying a social order. Souls are typically reincarnated from generation to generation, not randomly, but along lines dictated by kinship and rules of lineage—just as social roles are passed on.[17]

Thus far, I am in agreement with Durkheim: religion is politics. But I diverge from him on some crucial matters. The chief among these concern conscious intent and ideological flexibility. The meaning of a text is foundationally tied to authorial intent. Did the creators of primitive religious myths understand that they were really describing social and political realities? According to Durkheim, they did not. Their mythical realms are unconscious projections of their experience of the social world—imaginary constructs whose true source and content they did not understand.

This is entirely implausible. It derives such plausibility as it had for Durkheim from two facts: first, it was the *general* assumption of turn-of-the-century anthropologists that religious thinking—at least the religious thinking of "primitives"—was irrational, and thus required explanation by positing some irrational thought process(es) on the part of native mythographers. Second, it generally was further admitted that the *home* religion had derived from the more primitive forms and was, at root, also irrational. Durkheim knew, in any case, that at least modern Jews and Christians did not consciously identify their pantheon with social or political realities; why should one suppose that primitive peoples do?

But we now know that the rationality and cognitive powers of tribal peoples are not significantly different from ours;[18] and it is hard to imagine a "projective" process by means of which tribal thinkers would have constructed *unconsciously* religious systems that reflect social realities and needs in so much detail and with such power. It is as implausible as supposing that James Maxwell constructed his theory of electromagnetism *without being*

aware that he was solving a problem in physics.[19] At least in its *origins*, a myth that expresses political understanding could hardly have done so unconsciously—though historical processes might eventually sever such a story from its original meanings.[20]

Further arguing for this identification of religious myth with political theorizing are two considerations: that traditional societies typically do not harbor any *conceptual* distinction between their religious beliefs and their political commitments; and that we do not generally find them engaging in the business of political thought, if we look for it outside of their religious discourse. As to the latter, it is utterly implausible that complex social arrangements could arise out of thin air or random activity; everywhere and always, they are a matter of intense practical and intellectual concern.[21] As to the former, it is worth noting that precisely this lack of conceptual distinction has been noted, not just for tribal societies generally, but for ancient Jews and the cultures that surrounded them.[22] I shall, in any case, operate with the hypothesis that the business of Matthew's passion narrative (and of the biblical texts generally) is primarily—and self-consciously—political (and *not* 'religious' as *we* understand the term).[23]

Second, Durkheim has been taken to task[24] for offering an account which cannot explain religious movements that rebel against the existing social order or look beyond it. It is true that Durkheim emphasizes the hold that existing social norms have on human behavior and thought, at the expense of due consideration of the conditions that provoke political rebellion and progressive movements. That is because his attention was focused upon Australian aborigine cultures, and it was believed (probably mistakenly) that such cultures are static and unchanging over long stretches of time. But there is no theoretical barrier to a Durkheimian explaining religious thinking that is out of step with existing social conventions, because there is no reason to think that humans can never move beyond existing structures in their political thought. On the contrary: we know they often do, especially when existing structures no longer adequately address their needs.[25] The New Testament gives ample illustration of this possibility.

Third, it is often remarked that the gods are no mere mirror images of social structures, but are typically depicted as standing over against them. This could hardly be clearer than in the HB and NT, in which YHWH is not only distinguished from his chosen people, but judges them and punishes them col-

lectively when they depart from his will. How can the Durkheimian make sense of this? What this objection fails to recognize is the normative dimension along which we evaluate persons. When Socrates is said to be rational, to do well in fulfilling his destiny, meeting his needs, developing his particular talents and gifts, and so on—or to have failings in these respects—we are measuring his performance against some standard or ideal, particularized to his abilities, potential, and circumstances. We might think of this ideal as the Platonic Form of Socrates. Gods, I suggest, function roughly as the Platonic Forms of corporate persons: tribes, nations, institutions, and the like.[26]

Whether we look at the religious thought of ancient cultures or that of contemporary tribal peoples from a Durkheimian perspective, we find the notion of supernatural beings who personify idealized conceptions of social forces and corporate groups (both good and evil ones) to be pervasive. The spiritual world they populate provides a powerful way of conceptually framing thought about the needs, the dangers and opportunities faced, the mistakes and successes, and the proper courses of action, of a people or nation.

We must take careful note of this dualism between mundane reality and a "spirit" world of normatively idealized "projections"—Forms—as it will play a key role in our solution to the riddle of the sign of Jonah. Above all, we must shake ourselves free of the assumption that, because these Forms are personified just as are the social institutions for which they serve as ideals, they had to be taken to be literally conscious specters of some sort.

So much for substance; we must now move on to examine the structural features of myths, the contribution those features make to meaning, and the tools needed to reveal structure and uncover its semantic contribution. My approach here is somewhat eclectic, but most fundamentally inspired by the work of Claude Levi-Strauss (with some significant divergences).

Levi-Strauss, influenced by Hegelian dialectic, by the structural semantics of Ferdinand de Saussure, and by information-processing theory, analyzes myths as being comprised of layers of "contradicting" or contrasting themes, each layer somehow resolving itself in or reducing to the next, in such a manner that tension-generating social conflicts (which occupy the deepest, generative level) are "replaced" in the cognitive economy of the native mind by less-charged oppositions, thereby defusing the dissonance caused by the original difficulty. This "dialectical" process can be uncovered by "superposing" all available versions of a myth, without regard to chronological order of composition, so as to expose a

series of contrastive binary relations that "encode" cultural information. Just as, for de Saussure, language is comprised of semantic units (often called "sememes") that bear no intrinsic meaning, but derive their meaning contextually from their structural relations to other elements, so Levi-Strauss understands myths to be comprised of semantic elements (which we may call "mythemes") whose meanings are a function of their place within a system of relations among the mythemes comprising all versions of the myth.[27]

There are many features of this approach, and the theory that underpins it, that I consider to be wrong, even misguided. Levi-Strauss's fascination with binary oppositions, information theory, and Hegelian "contradictions" is more unhelpful than suggestive. Myths do not encode information in the way binary codes do; nor are Levi-Straussian "contradictions" (e.g., between wild and domestic, raw and cooked) any more true contradictions or even notions embodying conceptual tensions than are some of the Hegelian categories. Moreover, it is literally incoherent to suppose that linguistic signs or symbols could carry semantic content entirely as a result of their place within a system or structure of related signs—since any abstract (syntactic) structure can be "filled" with meaning in indefinitely many ways. Nevertheless, Levi-Strauss's approach to understanding myth contains a basic insight that must not be lost. Human communication, everywhere and always, has availed itself of the power of compositionality in coding messages: both at the syntactic level and the semantic one, a relatively small number of symbols and meanings are deployed, through the myriad of combinatorial possibilities they admit, to spell out the indefinitely many messages we may wish to convey. (Even at the subsyntactic/subsemantic level, languages make use of permutational possibilities to generate words from an alphabet and a small set of phonemes.) There is a trade-off between the number of basic signs/meanings employed and compression in the formulation of a message: the more basic syntactic/semantic elements employed, the shorter the string required to encode a message. There is an analogy from logic: the fewer the axioms and rules of inference a system employs, the longer the proofs must (on average) be, and vice versa.[28] A binary code presents a limiting case: a minimum of symbols at the expense of maximal inefficiency in spelling out messages. Where compression of message is a strong desideratum, there is no reason to stick to such minimalist symbolic resources; on the contrary. We should think of mythemes as *adding* to the stock of basic semantic units. It

is because of such addition that myths are able to compress so great a richness of meaning into such short compass. Meaning emerges from the structured concatenation of semantic units.

Structure can (by way of analogy to rules of syntax) provide some *constraints*, and can often help disambiguate content; moreover, it is a basic insight that the semantic content of a stretch of discourse is a function *both* of the intrinsic content of its semantic elements, and of their arrangement. In myth analysis, it is emphatically true that recognizing repeated occurrences of a mytheme, and comparing contexts of occurrence, can be pivotal in uncovering its significance. But Levi-Strauss errs in supposing that diachronic considerations are irrelevant to discerning the meanings of mythemes: there is no reason in principle why chronological order (either of the appearances of a mytheme within a story or myth cycle, or of its appearances in successive versions of a myth) cannot have semantic significance.[29]

What is most valuable and worth retaining in Levi-Strauss's approach are three ideas: that myths represent high-level theorizing by natives about human existence and its problems,[30] that they (often) contain highly organized structures of mythemes that determine the meaning of the myth as a function of mytheme content and the way the mythemes are placed into relationship with one another, and that recognition of similar mythemes and comparison of their known contexts is vital to uncovering their meanings.[31] It is a corollary that different arrangements of a set of mythemes can convey different messages or (of course) essentially the same message in different ways. It is difficult—perhaps impossible (and in any case, I have no space to pursue the issue here)—to give rules or a general recipe for moving from myth structures to myth meanings. However, Matthew's passion narrative offers, as we shall see, some sterling examples for structural analysis, so it will be possible to illustrate how the thing works in practice.

THE SIGN OF JONAH

The long prefatory excursus that I have just undertaken has been a necessary exercise for two reasons: first, because the theoretical framework within which my analysis of Matthew 12.39–40 proceeds is sufficiently unfamiliar to most readers that an explanation is essential to following my argument; and second,

because I think it only fair to lay my cards on the table at the outset, so as to alert the reader that I presuppose two hypotheses that are clearly controversial—that Matthew is myth, and that myths are (primarily) engaged in the business of social/political theorizing (and not speculations about "spooky stuff"). But it is time to return to Matthew; so now to business.

First I shall review a couple of the apologetic strategies—not many are available—which have been proposed by way of reconciling Matthew 12.39–40 with the chronology of Matthew's passion story. Then we shall examine that chronology in detail, showing that it does indeed require that Jesus was crucified and died on a Friday, and had emerged from the tomb by dawn on the following Sunday. This will set the stage for an analysis in which Matthew 12.39–40 offers a pivotal clue to the structure of the passion narrative, to a correct understanding of its employment of the theme of death and resurrection, and—as a corollary—to a resolution of the difficulty posed by the apparent discrepancy between Matthew 12.39–40 and the passion chronology.

The reader should be forewarned, however, that pursuing this lead is like tracing a thread that leads deep into a fabric whose weave connects that thread with many others leading off in multiple directions. This is not the place to follow these other leads, no matter how tantalizing they may be. I can only propose that the structure is there: coherent, intricate, cohesive—weaving together a complex tapestry of mythemes in the service of a message that can indeed be deciphered and that makes good sense of what we know of the history of the early Church.

Two traditional ways of handling the disparity introduced by "three days and three nights" are worth brief mention. The first of these interprets "day" and "night" in loose or figurative terms, noting that other chronological references in the Gospels are less specific.[32] The strategy is to cite other contexts in which "day" and "night" are used as temporal measures for shorter or less specific durations. Thus Delling makes the extraordinary argument that Jesus might have meant less than a twenty-four-hour period by "day and night" because the Jerusalem Talmud contains a few passages quoting rabbinical interpretations of the law that allow some part of a day to count as a day.[33] This is grasping at straws: even though Jesus was addressing scribes and Pharisees, can one seriously suppose him to have relied on such arcane, obscure, and probably contentious halachic (legal) technicalities in this context? Nor does this gloss sensibly accommodate "three *nights*."

A second strategy, ultimately more promising as we shall presently see, rejects the traditional location of Jesus' death on Friday, and argues for an earlier date.[34] Evaluation of this possibility requires a careful examination of Matthew's passion chronology.

Matthew's passion begins with chapter 26. Jesus announces to his disciples that in two days, at the Passover, he will be delivered up to be crucified. Now his enemies on the Sanhedrin conspire to arrest him but decide to delay until after the Passover meal. Jesus eats a meal at Bethany with Simon the leper and his disciples; an unnamed woman anoints him, and directly thereafter, Judas goes to the high priests and offers to betray him. Then on the Day of Preparation, Jesus commissions his disciples to prepare a meal for him in Jerusalem: the Last Supper, which in the synoptic gospels is a Passover meal.[35] Later that night, after the watch in Gesthemane, he is arrested, tried by the Sanhedrin, and convicted of blasphemy. The following morning—on Passover day—he is brought before Pilate who, failing to convince a Jewish mob of his innocence, releases Barabbas and condemns Jesus to be crucified. Meanwhile, Judas seeks to return the blood money to the Sanhedrin, who do not return it to the treasury but use it to buy a cemetery for foreigners (ξενοις).[36] Jesus is mocked by the Roman soldiers and crucified. (Mark adds the detail that this occurred at the third hour, which would have been at 9 AM, as Passover occurs hard by the vernal equinox, when sunrise and sunset occur at 6 AM and 6 PM, respectively.)

From the sixth hour (noon) till the ninth (3 PM) there is darkness over the land; at 3 PM, Jesus expires, the temple veil is rent, an earthquake occurs, and the dead saints rise from their tombs and enter Jerusalem. Jesus is buried by Joseph of Arimathea, presumably around dusk. The next day—that is, "after the day of Preparation," according to Matthew 27.62—the chief priests obtain permission from Pilate to post a guard at the tomb. This key passage indicates that the day following Passover was a Sabbath (a holy day: cf. Mark 15.42). As the weekly Sabbath falls on a Saturday, this entails that the Passover (also a Sabbath) fell on a Friday. Ergo, Jesus was crucified on Friday—as the tradition holds. Matthew 28.1ff. says that the two Marys visited the tomb "towards the dawn of the first day of the week"—that is, near sunrise Sunday morning—only to find the tomb empty.

To summarize then: Matthew's chronology is explicit that Jesus was crucified on a Friday and died three hours before sunset that day; by Sunday

sometime before daybreak, he had risen from the tomb. By anyone's count, that comes to two nights, a full day, and a bit (3 hours) of a second day—or, very nearly, half of a period of three days and three nights. What happened to the other night and two days? Dating the crucifixion to earlier in the week is impossible on Matthew's account, as we have just seen. How, then, can this truly be the sign of Jonah, the "one sign" given to Jesus' generation?

DEATH AND DESCENT INTO THE CHAOS WATERS

Fundamentalists[37] hold that the Gospel passion narratives retail a literal dying and bodily reconstitution of the founder of the faith, and that they record this event as historical. Liberal Bible scholars, by contrast, often insist that the Gospels refer to an event that occurs outside of history, in some sort of "spiritual" realm. They argue—usually citing 1 Corinthians 15—that the earliest layer of the tradition knows nothing of an empty tomb, and that Paul's conception of the resurrection body is not that of a physical body. But the fundamentalists typically ignore or dismiss the enormous Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) literature regarding death and resurrection (both Jewish and pagan);[38] and the liberals are forced to view the gospel passion narratives, not merely as later legendary accretions, but as ones that appear fundamentally to misunderstand the earlier Pauline christology—which pales beside the difficulty of making sense of transhistorical or superhistorical "events."[39] Neither approach offers much help with Paul's passing remark at 1 Corinthians 15.31 that he dies every day.[40]

It is impossible here to give even an adequate summary treatment of the ways in which the theme of death and resurrection is deployed in the Old Testament—to say nothing of pagan traditions. But we may take the story of Jonah as a clue. Jonah is swallowed by a "great fish (דאב)"—which for Matthew is clearly a figure for entry into the realm of death.[41] Are Matthew and his fellow Evangelists alone in making this association? Hardly: it is one of the most pervasive mythemes in the Old Testament.

We may, first, observe that the "great fish" represents an allusion to the mythical monster that in Hebrew mythology inhabits the "deep [וצלה, *metsolah* = חחום, *tehom*]," is, the subterranean repository of the chaos-waters first tamed by God on the second and third days of the creation (Gen. 1.6–10), so

as to make possible the bringing forth of the dry land—and with it, a stable base for human existence.[42]

The HB contains literally hundreds of references to the chaos-waters. In ordering the world, God confines them (to the oceans, but especially to Sheol, their domain), but they continually threaten to break forth and overwhelm the dry land (as they in fact do in the flood story).

Parting these unruly waters, controlling them, or walking upon them (Job 9.8) is the prerogative of God and of men upon whose shoulders God has placed the mantle of authority and leadership. Passing through the waters is a metaphor for death and rebirth, especially associated with rites of passage in which a nation is born (or reborn—Exod. 14, Josh. 3), or an individual dies to a former social existence and is reborn with a new social status.[43] There are a number of Psalms in which the Davidic king, Israel's hero, is plunged into the realm of Sheol, and the waters threaten to drown him.[44] But he is rescued by God. Rescued from what? "Chaos-waters" is clearly a figure of speech. For what does it stand?

The chaos-waters are not empty. Their most notorious denizen is, we know, the dragon or sea monster who inhabits the deep; he is sometimes identified as Leviathan or Rahab, and his cousins inhabit the chaos-waters/underworld of neighboring cultures: Tiamat in Babylonian myth, Yam in the Canaanite pantheon, Apophis and crocodiles and hippopotomi in Egyptian traditions, the seven-headed dragon Lotan (= Leviathan) in Ugaritic legend.[45] In the HB, Rahab sometimes occurs as an oblique reference to Egypt—in contexts in which Egypt is seen as a traditional enemy of Israel; indeed, as the paradigmatic denier of Israelite national identity and aspirations in Exodus (see Ps. 84.9, Isa. 51.9–11, Ezek. 29.3–12).

The association of Rahab with political threats to Israel's existence serves as a hint; but other passages in the HB offer a much more explicit gloss of the image of the chaos-waters—notably, in some of the Psalms.[46] In these we repeatedly see the language of chaos-waters and sea monsters juxtaposed with Israel's dominating concern with political survival. The realm of death/Sheol/chaos-waters/sea dragons is identified with Israel's enemies, the enemies of its king, and the threats they pose to her continued existence and autonomy. Correspondingly, God's (and his king's) ultimate victory over the waters is a figure for defeat of these enemies.[47]

If we now take this identification of chaos-waters with social/political

chaos, and generalize it to the less explicit passages in which the chaos-waters (and the realm of death) are invoked, we find—this should hardly come as a surprise—that we can consistently interpret those passages in terms of this metaphor: the original creation story, the Noachic flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, and of course much more. I cannot pursue that here. Even so, what has been said should suffice to establish a clear parallel between two realms: the mundane realm of social and political forces that threaten social order, and, mirroring the mundane, a transcendent realm of (demonic) spiritual forces that operate within the sphere of Death.

In ANE royal ideologies, it is first and foremost the king who has the responsibility for meeting and holding in check the forces of dissolution that threaten his nation; doing this successfully is a paramount requirement of kingship. The Psalms just cited clearly reflect the constant and mortal dangers to which Israel was subjected through most of her history, and the deep longing for kings who could not merely hold foreign invaders at bay, but triumph over and subjugate them. Parallel royal ideologies can be found in those very enemies that Israel faced.[48] There has been speculation that the Psalms may have played a liturgical role in Jewish ritual dramas of royal renewal in which the Davidic kings were portrayed as descending into the realm of death and then being resurrected.[49] But whether or not that was so, there can be little doubt about the use of death/resurrection imagery to capture the understanding of the king's role as first in the line of battle—and willing to be the first to sacrifice himself—in the struggle with evil.[50] Moreover, since national misfortune was often associated (reasonably enough) with internal disruptions generated by lax observance of social norms (i.e., sin), a proper king could be said to sacrifice himself, if need be, for the sins of his people.

PIECING THE PUZZLE

We now have in place three of the central pieces (with a fourth to follow) of the solution to our puzzle concerning the sign of Jonah: a conception of religious myth as political thought, the conceptual division of the social world into dual mirroring realms, a "transcendent" realm of Forms, and a mundane one which embodies these Forms or copies them, and third, an understanding, in particular, of kings as having the duty to engage the forces of

social evil, represented in the transcendent realm by death, dragons, and the Deep. But how can these help us?

The first step—and the most crucial one—is the recognition that, if the time elapsed between Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection occupies just *half* of the period Jonah spends within the whale, then perhaps the missing half is lurking in the vicinity. If Jewish religious thought recognizes a dualism between the ("transcendent") realm of death and those (mundane) spheres of human activity under the dominion of the forces of evil, then might it not be that the passion story divides the "time of Jonah" into two equal periods? Does Jesus' engagement with Satan's domain involve, not merely his descent into Sheol for a day and a half, but an equal period of time during which he submits himself to the power of, but ultimately triumphs over, those mundane forces that Matthew and his Church identified as evil?[51] That, at any rate, is the line of thought I shall pursue.

This suggestion is at least natural enough, given Jewish dualism; and it is surely reinforced by the obvious engagement between Jesus and the governing establishment in Jerusalem that immediately precedes, and leads to, his crucifixion.[52] But can we do anything more to confirm that Matthew is deploying a dualistic structure of this kind in constructing his passion story? I think we can. It is time to turn to the fourth, and final, piece of the puzzle.

CHERCHEZ LES FEMMES

Jesus' body lies in the tomb for a day and a half. It had been anointed (though not by Joseph), and then buried by Joseph of Aramathea. Matthew places two women—Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph (hence, presumably, the mother of Jesus—cf. Matt. 13.55)—at the scene of the tomb at dawn on Sunday, as first witnesses of the Easter event.[53] But women belonging to Jesus' entourage do not make their first appearance in the passion story on Easter morning. They are notably present as observers of his crucifixion and mourners of his death on Friday afternoon; the two Marys follow Joseph to the burial site. Thus, the two appearances of these women who are devoted to Jesus frame Jesus' descent into the (transcendent) underworld.

If we now consider the suggestion that Jesus' sojourn into the realm of death is structurally bifurcated into two halves, the second falling between the

death on the cross and the resurrection, we might wonder whether the *first* (presumably mundane) half of the sojourn is similarly demarcated by Matthew. Is it framed by women sympathetic to Jesus and ministering to him? Of course, since the two halves adjoin, we can take it that the women present at the crucifixion serve as structural markers, both for the beginning of the second half and for the end of the first. But that leaves us with finding the woman or women who signal the initiation of the first half of Jesus' passion.

Before we turn to that question, we must pause to ask whether it is at all plausible in the first place to construe the presence of the women at Matthew 27.55–61 and 28.1–10 as structural signposts in a myth. That view will be significantly buttressed if we can show that the presence of sympathetic women is a common mytheme associated in ANE religious contexts with the death and resurrection of a male hero.

As it happens, there are many examples that show that Matthew would almost surely have been familiar with this motif. Ezekiel mentions women—clearly Jewish women—weeping for the Babylonian royal fertility god Tammuz (Ezek. 8.14; see also Isa. 17.10–11), who undergoes an annual journey to the underworld associated with the harvesting in the fall and sprouting in the spring of the grain. Similar ideas were associated with the gods Attis/Adonis and Bacchus/Dionysus. In the story of the death and revivification of the Egyptian royal god Osiris, his wife Isis is the agent who gives him life. In his battle with death (Mot), the Canaanite Baal finds an ally in his sister, Anat.[54]

What is the meaning of this motif? The stories vary, but there is enough commonality to allow us to surmise that the women in these contexts serve as symbols of parturition. Individuals who undergo death and resurrection—descent into the underworld and then reemergence—are often, as we saw, symbolically moving from one social state or status to another, a transformation regularly associated with dying and being "reborn" or—as Evangelicals like to say—"born again." What more fitting way of fleshing out the symbolic representation of this idea than to have a woman or women—givers of birth—in attendance?

We must not be deterred from drawing these analogies by the commonplace objection that the story of Jesus differs in significant ways from the stories of Osiris, Tammuz, Bacchus, and the rest. Indeed, they all differ from one another, without that destroying the common significance of the mourning-

women motif: we must not lose sight of the fact that mythemes are semantic elements that admit of myriad arrangements and rearrangements. That, indeed, is their function: just as words bearing intrinsic semantic content are placed in sequential relation to other words to express multiple messages, so mythemes can appear in varied contexts, retaining an intrinsic meaning but contributing in manifold ways (depending upon the semantic environment) to the construction of differing (or similar!) messages. We should also bear in mind that the gospel message was being preached, not just to Jews, but to Gentiles whose cultural backgrounds would almost always have given them familiarity with, or even allegiance to, pagan myths containing this theme of parturition.

Beyond this, it is arguable that the presence of the women in the passion narratives would have called to mind for first-century Jews the theme of womanly travail in childbirth that appears in some of the prophetic literature as a figure for the eschatological process in which Israel is finally saved by YHWH and made the first among nations. Here again, a rite of passage in which a "new" nation and world are created is figured in terms of death and birth.[55]

We have, then, good reason to suspect that the women whose appearances bracket Jesus' captivity within the physical bonds of death represent for Matthew a reiteration of the theme of women who, sympathetic to a fallen hero, mourn him and usher his entry into, and also his escape from, the snares of the underworld. They evoke, therefore, a familiar mythical scenario: the descent of the hero into the underworld and his return, transformed through this rite of passage into a new kind of being, that is, thereby acquiring a new social status. But Jesus' ordeal, we are guessing, has another half, an earlier one that is mundane. Where is this missing mundane half? And—as Matthew is silent about what exactly transpires while Jesus' body lies embalmed within the tomb and he is somehow (presumably) harrowing Hell—what might this prior period tell us about the exact shape of the salvific mission accomplished by Jesus during his encounter with "Leviathan"? Would not Matthew, if he were operating with a symbol system and a set of syntactic rules governing the ordered assembly of these symbols into readable messages, mark the initiation of the first phase of Jesus' ordeal with another sympathetic woman or two?

Once the question is posed in this way, its answer virtually leaps out at us. For there is such a woman, and her actions clearly betray her role as the

one who ushers in Jesus' entry into the realm of death. This woman—she is unnamed—puts in her appearance during the dinner that Jesus celebrates with his disciples at the home of Simon the leper. It is she whose special act of caring for Jesus will be "told in memory of her" wherever the gospel is preached. She anoints Jesus with expensive ointment. There are several features of this episode that call for special attention. The first is that the disciples object to her ministering to Jesus; he replies that he will soon depart from them. They do not seem to grasp the significance of what she has done. But readers generally perceive this anointing as appropriate to a declaration of Jesus as the Messiah—God's anointed king. That is part of the story. The other part is revealed by Jesus' own declaration of the purpose of this anointing: ". . . she has done it to prepare me for burial [προς τὸ ἐνταφιάσαι με ἐπσίησεν]." (Matt. 26.12)

This is striking. In Matthew, the funeral anointing of Jesus takes place at this meal, not at any time after he is removed from the cross. One might argue that the women who attended Jesus' removal from the cross could not have anticipated that removal, and would have had no time to gather and prepare burial spices and ointments. How much more remarkable, then, that this woman was able to foresee the course of events!

But the most important observations to be made are two: first, anointing for burial was an act that in Jewish custom was performed only at or after the time of death; and second, Jesus no sooner announces this burial preparation, than Judas departs to betray him to the high priests, and the events of the passion narrative are set in motion. It is at this very moment that Jesus begins directly to encounter and engage the forces of death.[56] If we wish to understand what he accomplishes through this engagement, we shall have to excavate the structure and significance of his captivity at the hands of the high priests and the Romans.

That would take us too far afield; but, by way of announcing that there is structure aplenty to be found, I shall take note of one such structural feature. Jesus' subjection to the power of the authorities in Jerusalem is itself marked by a basic division. He is first tried by the Jerusalem Sanhedrin. Then he is handed over to Pilate and the Romans for execution. Improbable as such a scenario would historically have been,[57] it gives Jesus opportunity to interact with both of the spheres of authority that reigned over first-century Jews.

How is this division marked? By a woman. She is Pilate's wife; and in a dream, she receives the message that Jesus is righteous and not to be persecuted by Pilate (Matt. 27.19). That such a remarkable, and surely apocryphal, incident should be inserted by Matthew into his story is clearly evidence that he intends, once again, to signal an important transition in the ordeal by means of which Jesus vanquishes death through his sacrifice. And so, he is led to slaughter while another Jesus—Jesus Barabbas (Jesus Son of the Father) is permitted to escape. Then the Roman legionnaires crown him king and place upon his shoulders the mantle of the emperor,[58] unwittingly reenacting Psalms 22, Jeremiah 30.9, and other HB passages.

There are a few loose ends to be gathered up. First, when did the meal at Bethany occur? Second, what was redeemed by Jesus' sacrificial act? Third, could not the structures I have claimed to discover be admitted by fundamentalist exegetes—could they not point out that this is not incompatible with supposing that Jesus did suffer (literally) a physical death and enjoy (again literally) a physical restoration to life? And what about the Easter appearances of Jesus to his disciples?

A FINAL PIECE: THE CHRONOLOGY OF BETHANY

Let us begin with a brief look at the meal at Bethany, which, I claim, marks the descent of Jesus into the realm of the *tehom* (the "deep") and direct engagement with his enemies. This is the one chronological point on which one might wish Matthew to have been more explicit. Our primary clue is Jesus' declaration (Matt. 26.2) that the Passover will come "after two days." This is followed by a mention of the plotting of the chief priests and elders, something that could have occurred on the same day. Matthew continues, "Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came . . ." (Matt. 26.6–7). The "now when" leaves it vague how long after the declaration of Matthew 26.2 the Bethany meal occurred. We know this must be within two days prior to Thursday night—hence, conceivably after dark on Tuesday as *we* reckon days, but more likely on Wednesday or as late as Thursday morning. The reference to priestly plotting which follows Jesus' declaration suggests that the meal would not have occurred before Wednesday. A meal as late as midday Thursday is conceivable, but would hardly have

given the disciples time to walk from Bethany to Jerusalem—about an hour's journey—and make provision for the evening meal. Thus, Matthew's chronology points to a meal occurring sometime between Wednesday evening and early Thursday morning. Matthew's use of the ambiguous "ἀνάκειμαι" unfortunately does not indicate whether the meal in question was a supper or a breakfast. It is, however, consistent with its having been an early breakfast on Thursday morning.

Matthew 26.17 introduces the events of Thursday with the temporal indicator, "Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread . . . ," which might be thought to suggest that Matthew places these events on the day following the Bethany meal. The Greek text, however, reads "Now on the first of unleavened . . ." Matthew 26.17 is in any case initially puzzling, as the Feast of Unleavened Bread occurs immediately *after* Pesach. By the first century, however, the two feasts had been combined, and the entire seven-day period could be referred to with either feast name. Moreover, the preparations for both Pesach and the feast of Unleavened Bread (getting rid of all leaven, slaughtering and roasting the sacrificial lamb) occurred during the afternoon preceding the Pesach meal.[59] Thus, it would be natural to understand Matthew 26.17 to refer to a period beginning around midday on Thursday, which is consistent with taking the Bethany meal to have been a Thursday breakfast.

In order for the prophecy of the sign of Jonah accurately to be fulfilled (if we assume the resurrection to have occurred just prior to the arrival of the women at the tomb),[60] it would be necessary for Jesus to enter the *tehom* just around dawn on Thursday. That is perhaps inconvenient for Matthew: it means that Jesus' anointing must occur at an early hour, at a meal occurring before dawn on Thursday. It may be because of this awkwardness that Matthew is a bit vague at this point in his chronology. Others have noted that the chronological constraints on Matthew's narrative entail other inconveniences: a midnight trial before the Sanhedrin,[61] and a very hasty burial of Jesus' body. Matthew may have preferred vagueness to adding another implausibility to his tale.

"SOMETHING GREATER THAN JONAH IS HERE"

During the second half of the eighth century BCE, Assyria conquered and destroyed Israel, and its king Sennacherib made King Hezekiah of Judah a

vassal after nearly laying waste to Jerusalem. With this history as background, the apocryphal story of Jonah has the reluctant prophet converting Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria. Somehow, Jonah persuades the nation that has conquered Israel to repent and obey the god of the conquered people.

Something greater than Assyria oppressed the people of Judea in the first century CE; a city greater than Nineveh dominated the Near East. Rescuing Israel would take a prophet greater than Jonah, a prophet who could teach repentance to that greater city. But whom did Jesus save?

Modern Christians believe—naturally—that Jesus came to save "the world"—a world that includes potentially all persons (at least all who hear the Good News) but, in particular, that certainly includes them. Further, they quite typically think of salvation in personal terms: it is fundamentally a matter of reestablishing a right relationship between an individual and his God. Was that in fact Jesus' mission, as Matthew understood it?

A proper investigation of this question would, unfortunately, require a much more detailed analysis of Matthew's Gospel; indeed, a much more detailed analysis of the passion narrative. I shall content myself with the suggestion that Matthew thought of salvation primarily in corporate terms (passages apparently to the contrary notwithstanding); and that the Kingdom of God, over which a royal Jesus is to preside, will be one that includes both Jews and the Gentiles of the greater Roman world. But it also excludes. Most particularly, it excludes the Jewish hierarchy in Jerusalem, and certain Jewish parties that are depicted as opponents of Jesus—the Pharisees and Sadducees.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

There is no logical incompatibility between accepting my analysis of Matthew's chronology, and a literalist conception of Jesus' death and resurrection. Most readers will, of course, recognize the profound distance between the interpretive methodology I have employed and that favored by fundamentalists. Nevertheless, one could graft a literal death and resurrection into my account of Matthew's project; indeed, one might offer the suggestion that God is a good structuralist, crafting the sacred history of redemption of his people in just the clever ways I have imputed to the mortal Matthew.

The implausibility of this suggestion is however easy to see. The appeal to a divine playwright/puppeteer is otiose; it no longer does any explanatory work and has no independent grip. Not only is there nothing by way of evidence not otherwise explainable that favors it, but there is much, in the way of historical implausibilities, that strongly works against it. The question of miracles aside, it is the uniform experience of human affairs that their historical unfolding does *not* exhibit the kinds of structural patterns and symmetries so characteristic of myth.

To be sure, the issue I have just engaged cannot be settled on the basis of such a partial analysis of the Gospel of Matthew. I have argued that the death/resurrection motif in Matthew's passion is of a piece with death/resurrection symbolism in Jewish traditions and those of a much broader sweep of ANE traditions; and I have argued that the significance of that motif is to be sought within the arena of ancient thought about matters of political legitimacy and stability—not in terms of speculation about matters biological or "spiritual" (whatever that might mean).

But a proper evaluation of these claims clearly requires that much more be said. I have offered only the merest hints about what Matthew's political agenda might be; a serious proposal would have, at least, to spell that out, to show that the agenda was a plausible one for the early Christian community to have and one that could explain the risks it undertook to promote this ideological program. Furthermore, it would have to show in detail, not only how the rest of Matthew's Gospel articulates that agenda but how the rest of the New Testament (to say nothing of other early Christian sources) can be read as proposing more or less (with some differences of emphasis or viewpoint) the same general political program.[62]

The hypothesis that Matthew's project is to propose a serious political program allows the approach taken here to escape other stock objections regularly raised against "liberal" and skeptical interpretations of the Gospels. Let us begin with the question of the Easter appearances of Jesus. It is regularly averred by conservatives that only the Easter appearances can account for the beginnings of the early Church. After the crucifixion, Jesus' disciples were scattered, afraid, and above all disheartened, for they had not expected that their savior would be captured, dishonored, and killed—to say nothing of anticipating a resurrection.[63] The resurrection appearances come as a complete surprise; they galvanize the disciples, confer upon them an under-

standing of Jesus' mission (finally!!), and weld them into a unified movement of preachers of the Good News.

The early Church would indeed have seen itself as the bearer of "Good News," and there is no denying that many early Christians were prepared to take serious risks and make significant sacrifices in the service of promoting that news. But this does not at all require us to suppose that the Easter appearances occurred, or that without them, the disciples would have been at a loss and the movement abruptly aborted. Whether or not it originally formed around a teacher who was executed, the movement did not evaporate for the simple reason that it was able to formulate a political theory, strategy, and program that spoke powerfully to the condition of many people, rich and poor, Jewish and Gentile, in Judea and across the Roman empire. For Judea at the time, the dominating *practical* problem was Rome's cruel hegemony and evident invincibility. For Rome itself, the preeminent *theoretical* problems were establishing the legitimacy of the Caesars and finding political principles that could coherently organize a society that had effectively lost its tribal structure and become global. Matthew, writing in the wake of Judea's failed revolt, presents, in the royal figure of Jesus, a new way of solving these enormous challenges that preoccupied conqueror and conquered alike. It is the originality and penetrating insight of this program (and the literary power of the expression it found in the writings of the Evangelists) that held the movement together and spread its teachings.

It is not as if we have no parallels or precedents for this sort of thing. Anthropologists have been able to study a variety of millenarian movements, the contexts in which they arise, and the phenomena associated with them. Among those phenomena, a prominent role is played by purported visions, apparitions, and the like, which put leaders or would-be leaders of a movement immediately in touch with the powers and forces of the supernatural world. Such visions—or rather, the claim to have them—will confer authority upon the aspiring leader who possesses enough charisma to have his or her claims accepted.[64] There is, therefore, no reason to assume (though also no particular reason to deny) that Peter, Paul, or any other Christian leader may have had some subjective religious experience, whether involving an apparition of Jesus or some more inwardly directed ecstatic state.

Finally, then, a few words on the question whether Matthew's Gospel has some historical "core." In particular, did the Christian movement have its origin in the influence of a Jewish teacher named Jesus who was arrested by

the Sanhedrin, tried under Pilate, and crucified by the Romans? The first thing that should be said in response to this question is that, although the answer to it matters very much to most Christians, *it does not matter very much to the project I have undertaken here*. To be sure, the question how the Christian movement arose is one whose answer will depend upon whether there was such a teacher. But the questions *I* have been trying to answer concern the meaning of Matthew's Gospel. Once one adopts the theoretical framework proposed here, one can proceed without knowing how to answer these particular historical questions, interesting as they might be in their own right.

There is nothing in my reading of Matthew's Gospel that excludes the possibility of a historical founder of Christianity who taught in Galilee, went to Jerusalem, and courted execution at the hands of the authorities. On the other hand, we can see clearly from the theoretical perspective I am recommending how artificial is the project of trying to separate history from legend, by "peeling away" putatively apocryphal accretions to an unvarnished historical memory so as to reveal a mundane core upon which to confer the mantle of truth. For the "realistic" elements of the plot are just as integral to the message of the narrative as are the fantastical ones. If some of them are historical, that is a lucky accident; if it had served Matthew's purpose to make up realistic episodes, he would not have hesitated to do so. It is no more germane to the goal of understanding the basic meaning of Matthew's text to discern a historical core, than are debates over whether Matthew used one source or two or three.

Was Jesus bodily raised from the tomb after a day and two nights? Anyone who accepts the interpretation offered here will recognize this question to be profoundly misguided, but not because the answer must surely be no. It is *not* that we cannot seriously entertain that possibility (and not even because it would be logically incompatible with our interpretation: it is not), but because to entertain it is to reveal a complete incomprehension of Matthew's purpose, a misunderstanding so fundamental as virtually to preclude recognition of the truths Matthew means to convey.

Those who seek a risen Jesus reveal their own religious obsession with the problem of death. But to impose this existential concern upon the Gospel texts is to turn them into what they were never intended by their authors to be: reflections on the personal or biological fate of individuals. Their concern was with social and cultural survival.

The ANE mythographers were of course not oblivious to the universal concern over death; nor were they unmindful of the power that personal birth and death had as metaphors for larger social realities. But they no more thought of themselves as offering an escape from individual dissolution than did Ezekiel when he conjured up a vision of bone meeting bone. What transfixed Ezekiel's religious imagination was not the medical reconstruction of deceased ancestors, but the reconstitution of a defeated and dispersed nation—the very image invoked in Matthew 27.51–53 by the bodies of the saints arising from the bloodstained earth at Golgotha.[65]

After a three-day ordeal in the chaos-waters of Sheol, Jonah emerges to teach Nineveh respect for the Lord. But now an even greater imperial city rules over little Judea; to teach Rome the Way of the Lord will require a greater figure than Jonah. How could such a mission hope to succeed? The answer to that important question belongs to the rest of the story, and requires an extended analysis of the Gospels. Beyond the few hints given here,[66] that is a project for another occasion.[67]

NOTES

1. This sort of claim is virtually aboriginal; we find it already at 1 Cor. 15:3–4, one of the earliest writings in the NT. Skeptics suggest rather that the early Christians scoured the Hebrew Bible for passages that could be creatively applied *ex post facto* to events in their day. I shall be suggesting a more radical understanding.

2. Though the apparent imperviousness of the disciples to Jesus' repeated description of his fate—an imperviousness manifested in their apparent dismay at the prophecy's fulfillment—does require explanation. (Cf. the less explicit Luke 11.30). Indeed, the disciples are obtuse, not only with respect to this prophecy but—especially in John—in understanding Jesus' parables and deeds. A full discussion would take us too far afield, but the pre-Resurrection ignorance of the disciples serves at least the dramatic end of highlighting and heightening the illumination and courage the disciples receive from their witness to the risen Lord. That transformation aside, it also motivates their abandonment of Jesus upon his arrest—which echoes Isa. 53.3–12; also Ps. 22, 31, 69, and 88.

3. According to the traditions preserved in all the Gospels, the passion took place at the time of Passover (John disagrees with the Synoptics only to the extent of placing the crucifixion on the Day of Preparation rather than on the day of Passover itself). As this falls very near the spring equinox, we can infer that the "ninth hour"—the time of death—would have struck at 3 PM, and that daybreak occurred at 6 AM.

4. The reader may wonder whether I apply this claim to all of the Gospel accounts. I

do; but in this essay, I am confining my attention to Matthew. This approach, parenthetically, permits one to explain the contradictory details in the Gospel narratives (and elsewhere) without supposing bungled historical traditions. Variations in the story may indicate differences in theological message or emphasis, or simply different ways of assembling available mythemes—see below—to convey the same message.

5. Among the ancients, Philo Judaeus construes parts of the Hebrew Bible as myth; we find myth also in Augustine's interpretive arsenal. See St. Augustine, *Confessions* 5.14(24), 6.5(8), and all of Bk. 13; Philo *De Posteritate Caini* 7, *De Abrahamo* 99, *The Migration of Abraham, Questions and Answers on Genesis*, and *Questions and Answers on Exodus.*

6. See his article, "Religionsgeschichtliche Schule," in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 2, ed. John H. Hayes (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), p. 386.

7. For arguments that the genre of the Gospels is myth, cf. Charles Talbert, *What Is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

8. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

9. This is the consistent strategy of such Evangelical apologists as William Craig, Gary Habermas, and Stephen T. Davis. It is also regularly deployed by mainstream scholars such as E. P. Sanders (cf. *Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 166–67) and N. T. Wright (e.g., *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, pp. 607–608, concerning the women at the empty tomb, of which more presently)—to give just two examples.

10. Recalling the protest that interpretation of the Gospels in terms of the genre of myth has been tried and failed, we allow that the point is partially correct. But the conception of myth used by earlier exegetes was not informed by major developments in myth analysis achieved by twentieth-century anthropologists. It is only recently that such more sophisticated understandings of myth have begun to be applied to the biblical texts.

11. I have some things to say on this head in Fales, "Review of Douglas Geivett and Gary Habermas, eds., *In Defense of Miracles*," *Philosophia Christi* 3 (2001): 7–35, and in Fales, *Divine Intervention*, in manuscript.

12. The use of the category of myth in Bible scholarship has historically focused heavily upon the problem presented by miracle stories, which, from our perspective, implies far too narrow a conception of myth (see below). A recent party to this error is Craig Evans, "Life-of-Jesus Research and the Eclipse of Mythology," *Theological Studies* 54 (1993): 3–36. Evans's study is ill-served by his unexplicated and untutored deployment of the notion of myth. So far as one can glean a meaning from his usage, a myth is simply a story that is (literally understood?) false. Almost no anthropologist today would accept such a conception of myth. Matters are not improved when, at the end of his essay, Evans makes reference to a revised conception of myth that emerges from recent scholarship, without a word to indicate what that new conception might be.

The primary burden of Evans's article, in any event, is to show that recent scholarship has abandoned the project of applying the category of myth to the NT—and, correlatively, has come to accept that Jesus did perform miracles. Evans lists seven criteria by which the accuracy of a miracle report may be judged—criteria it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine, but that fall lamentably short of plausibility.

In any case, the authorities cited by Evans as supposedly granting the historicity of NT miracles fall roughly into three categories. There are, first, those who take the miracle reports seriously as historical data, but do not invoke any supernatural agency in explaining them. Exemplifying this position is, e.g., J. D. Crossan, who is prepared to admit some naturalistically explainable events such as faith healings and exorcisms, but whose attitude toward nature miracles is quite different. Crossan is rare among Bible scholars in exhibiting some familiarity with the anthropological literature, and applying its lessons to biblical miracle stories.

A second treatment, exemplified by E. P. Sanders and R. H. Fuller, also admits (and emphasizes) healings and exorcisms—well documented in contemporary contexts—and simply dodges the hard cases, such as water-into-wine or resurrection.

Finally, there are some credulous commentators. A. E. Harvey, also leaning heavily on the naturalistically explainable healings/exorcisms, extends the strategy to other effects (e.g., to Hanina's invulnerability to a poisonous serpent) by claiming paranormal powers for holy men. (Harvey is silent on the question whether it matters to which god such a man prays.) Harvey's strategy does seem, however, to tend in the direction of equal-opportunity credulity. Thus, he seems to credit Josephus' fantastic yarns about portents of the fall of the Temple (*The Wars of the Jews* 6.288–309). Some of the inferential leaps made by these scholars in deciding the authenticity of some NT miracle stories are breathtaking. In any case, Evans's treatment lumps together positions such as Crossan's, which is insightful and plausible, with Harvey's, which is not.

13. As we shall presently see, the rhetorical thrust of Jesus' reply cuts considerably deeper than this. Jesus in this pericope may also be alluding to the language of Ps. 74.9–17.

14. This is, at this level of generality, congruent with a major tradition of myth interpretation within anthropology. Just one prominent example would be Robin Horton—see, e.g., his "African Thought and Western Science," in *Rationality*, ed. Bryan R. Wilson (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 131–71. I think Horton is wrong in placing the emphasis upon myth as explanation of natural phenomena.

15. For the moment, I bracket the question whether the social-contract story can be grouped with religious myths. Emil Durkheim is the *locus classicus* for this view of myth (see below). For the classical era, see Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Atlantic Heights, NJ: Humanities Press, 1974).

16. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (New York: Free Press, 1965 [1912]). Durkheim's work exerted a major influence upon, e.g., the analysis of ritual by the major structure-functionalists such as Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, and Evans-Pritchard.

17. The fate of the soul is subject to variation, especially when, e.g., an individual plays a unique role or significant changes in social structure are envisioned.

18. One of the more dramatic changes of heart on this score occurred in the case of Lucien Levy-Bruhl. Compare his *Primitive Mentality*, trans. Lilian A. Claire (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966 [1925]) with *The Notebooks on Primitive Mentality*, trans. Peter Riviere (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975 [1949]).

19. That tribespeople engage in theorizing about social structures and other matters has

now been established beyond serious doubt. For examples, see Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, trans. James Harle Bell, John Richard von Sturmer, and Rodney Needham (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969 [1949]), pp. 124–27 and *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967 [1958]), pp. 169–75, and Robin Horton, "African Traditional Thought and Western Science," in *Rationality*, ed. Bryan R. Wilson (New York: Harper & Row, 1970) and "Tradition and Modernity Revisited," in *Rationality and Relativism*, ed. Martin Hollis and Steven Lukes (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982); also see Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937), esp. chap. 4.

20. As I believe actually did occur in the history of Western religions. But that is a story I shall not have space to pursue. I must however interject here two related points of considerable importance that have been brought home to me by Richard Carrier. The first concerns whether the *reception* of a myth by the mythographer's contemporaries will (for the most part) reflect an understanding of this "non-supernatural" meaning. This is a delicate point, on which I have no settled opinion. It seems possible—even likely—that there will be a wide range of conceptual sophistication in the ways a myth is understood, from those who fully understand it as political reflection to those who take it in the most doggedly literal way. (Political notions quite generally require considerable conceptual sophistication: how many ordinary citizens have a theoretical grasp of, e.g., the notion of a right to private property?) Those who wish to propagate a myth among *hoi poloi* must take account of this (which explains, in part, the regular use of vivid narrative). The second question is when, why, and how the Christian gospel came to be understood in a literal, and ultimately "non-political," way. Watershed moments occur, in my view, at the dispute between Constantine and the Church over the relationship between Church and Emperor (and the ensuing long-surviving doctrine of the Two Swords), with Augustine's response in *The City of God* to the scandal of the fall of Christianized Rome (the "Eternal City"), and, ultimately in the writings of John Locke concerning Church/State separation. But Carrier has pointed out to me that some much earlier Christian sources—notably, Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* and *On the Resurrection*, and Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection of the Dead* (both dating to the latter part of the second century), among others—are not easy to interpret except as taking the gospel message literally.

21. The structure-functionalist school in anthropology liked to emphasize the extent to which social institutions can arise without rational or conscious planning, by means of a kind of natural selection. It was typically held that "the natives" *do not understand* the real functions and operation of their own social practices, and construct myths as *ex post facto* fanciful rationalizations for their customs. But—making due allowance for human ignorance of some of the causes and effects of social practices—this is obvious nonsense. It is absurd to suppose that even the Australian aborigines could have developed and mastered their kinship systems (among the most complex in the world) without the conceptual understanding they clearly display of the underlying principles. See Levi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, esp. pp. 126–28. For more on the cognitive abilities of "primitive" peoples, see, e.g., Richard B. Lee and Irven DeVore, ed., *Man the Hunter* (Chicago: Aldine, 1968) and Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1972).

22. See, e.g., N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), pp. 154–59, and Richard Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1997), "Introduction" and repeatedly in the collected papers by various scholars. Ancient Jews simply did not operate with our modern categories. An interpretation which recognizes them to be engaged simply in the tasks of politics and political thought is the most economical and natural explanation of this fact, even allowing the provisional concession that literal-minded glosses invoking disembodied specters may have existed alongside the serious business of sorting out political issues.

23. For more detailed arguments concerning the political interpretation of religious myths, and its connection to interpretive charity, see Evan Fales, "Truth, Tradition, and Rationality," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 6 (1976): 97–113, and "The Ontology of Social Roles," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 7 (1977): 139–61.

24. By H. H. Farmer in *Towards Belief in God* (London: SCM Press, 1942), chap. 9.

25. This point is actually connected to my first divergence from Durkheim: where Durkheim sees humans in the grip of social forces that are overpowering and mysterious to them, and so unconsciously reified as gods, I suggest that these forces are usually both correctly recognized and subject, when necessary, to rational control, manipulation, and innovation.

26. (When they behave themselves, that is; stories of malfeasance can be construed as thought experiments in the implications of social dysfunction.) My claim is virtually obvious for such eponymous gods as Athena and Roma. It is well known that the Platonic idea of positing a realm of normative Forms had a wide and deep influence upon political thought in the Hellenistic world (see, e.g., Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, p. 153; Gerd Thiessen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 25–29, esp. 26n8; John J. Collins, "The Heavenly Representative: The 'Son of Man' in the Similitudes of Enoch," and James H. Charlesworth, "The Portrayal of the Righteous as an Angel," both in John J. Collins and George W. E. Nickelsburg, ed., *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), pp. 111–33 and 135–51 respectively; but, though Plato may have been one of the first to give analytic expression to the idea, it comes from far more ancient stock, and is far more widespread than his influence. Thus, the words of Egyptian pharaohs were said to embody the voice of Maat, the goddess of justice (see Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948], p. 149).

Similarly, in a much later period, the goddess Iustitia was said to reside within the breasts of some Medieval kings (Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957], pp. 107ff., 136–43, n473). Within the HB and Pseudepigrapha, this theme can be found well illustrated in the persona of Wisdom, who proceeds from God as his first creation (Prov. 8.22–36) and who sets the standards for human behavior (see also Wisd. of Sol. 6–12; Sirach 24; see, e.g., George Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972], pp. 61–62). Not dissimilar is the conception of the λογος of John 1.

27. See Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, part 3: "Magic and Religion."

28. On the other hand, a minimalist set of axioms/rules leads to simplification at the metalevel—e.g., makes for shorter proofs of completeness and consistency.

29. A dramatic illustration of the analytic poverty of Levi-Strauss's synchronic method of juxtaposing versions of a myth is provided by a comparison of his structural analysis of the Oedipus myth with the far richer diachronically sensitive analysis offered by Terry Turner. Compare Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, pp. 209–15, with Terrence Turner, "Oedipus: Time and Structure in Narrative Form," in *Forms of Symbolic Action*, ed. Robert F. Spencer (American Ethnological Society Proceedings, 1969) (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), pp. 26–68. Turner's analysis of the Oedipus cycle is a bravura performance, and about as accomplished a specimen of structural analysis as can be found in the literature. Other significant works on myth influenced by Levi-Strauss's structuralist approach include Edmund Leach, *Genesis as Myth and other Essays* (London: Cape, 1969), Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 1966), and Philippe Descola, "Constructing Natures: Symbolic Ecology and Social Practice," in *Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Descola and Gisli Palsson (London: Routledge, 1996).

30. Furthermore, Levi-Strauss is right that myths are often generated by the practical and theoretical concerns given rise by social crisis or by the intellectual tensions resulting from an ideology that is inadequate to the needs of a group. That inadequacy may be either practical or conceptual (or both). But Hegelian dialectic is far too simplistic a framework for understanding how theoretical difficulties are resolved, either in science or in practical life.

Turner's analysis of the Oedipus cycle strongly suggests, incidentally, an important insight into the function of Greek tragedy and the catharsis it produces. The tragedies can be conceived as extended meditations upon the consequences of introducing anomaly into a finely tuned social structure, and upon how the destructive effects of such anomalies might in principle be repaired—not an easy problem, given that a social system is like a machine whose operations inexorably grind on, propagating the disorder, a machine which cannot be halted in order to effect a repair. Thus, a prophecy induced Laios to expose his infant son, which leads to Laios's death at the hands of Oedipus, to incest at the highest level of Theban society, to suicide, but finally, harmony is restored, in a demonstration of how a social system, set out of kilter at the foundations of its structure, can be restored to health after oscillating dangerously through a series of disasters over several generations. And so, a Greek audience would have been reassured that its social arrangements do have the capacity for self-healing, even after severe insults to the social fabric—that assurance is catharsis.

31. The matter of cross-context comparisons is somewhat delicate. The greatest purveyor of such comparisons, perhaps, was James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*. Frazer was roundly excoriated, with some justice, for running roughshod over cultural and contextual differences in assuming that a given syntactic element (e.g., lustration with water) carries the same semantic content wherever it appears. Levi-Strauss errs in going to the other extreme and making context count for everything. The wise path is to be sensitive to context, to continuities of tradition, to cultural diffusion, to cultural borrowing and to any other historical evidence for shared significance as well as for differentiation. We may be able to illuminate a

mytheme by comparison with cognates (judged initially on the basis of surface linguistic and semantic similarity) found elsewhere within a given myth, in variants of the myth, in other myths belonging to that tradition, and in myths belonging to traditions that have some historical connection to the home tradition of the myth.

32. Mark characteristically uses "after" (μετά), as does Matt. 27.63; in the pericope concerning the raising of the Temple, all the Gospels that employ it (Matthew, Mark, and John) use (διά, ἐν), translated "in," though the former can mean "after" or "in the course of." Matt. and Luke also use "on the third" (τῇ τθιτ ἡ).

33. Gerhard Delling, article on ἡμέρα in Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 948–50. A similar strategy is used by Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), p. 328, and D. A. Carson, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), p. 296. Both cite obscure passages from the Talmud (e.g., Pesahim 4a, Yerushalmi Shabbat 9:3) and the HB (e.g., 1 Sam. 30.1 and 12, Esther 4.16 and 5.1) against which exactly the same objections are decisive. Thus, e.g., the critical temporal marker in these passages (Hebrew אַחַר, translated "on") can mean "after" or "beyond the time."

34. A popular exponent of this view was Herbert W. Armstrong, founder of the Worldwide Church of God; see Armstrong, *The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday* (USA: Worldwide Church of God, 1972 [1952]). In Armstrong's theory, Jesus was buried on a Wednesday, late in the afternoon, and resurrected late the following Saturday afternoon. Armstrong commits—among others—the cardinal sin of using one Gospel (John) to correct another (Matt.).

35. John's chronology differs from that of the other Evangelists in placing Jesus' crucifixion on the Day of Preparation, as opposed to Passover itself. This permits him consistently to carry through the theme, prominent in John, that Jesus is the Lamb of God, a lamb that must be slaughtered on the Day of Preparation (the evening of Passover: Jewish days begin at sundown). It requires John, however, to remove the Eucharistic language from his Last Supper scene (no longer a Passover meal), and to associate it with the feeding of the five thousand. Here we see already the same message—Jesus as the Passover lamb whose body is eaten by the redeemed—being conveyed by different arrangements of story elements or mythemes.

36. Here we meet one of the tangential threads earlier alluded to. Matthew's account of the fate of Judas—but more especially of the thirty pieces of silver paid as *quid pro quo* by the priests—limns critical elements in the economy of salvation wrought by the sacrifice of Jesus. Tracing the structure of this episode, which cannot detain us here, yields rich rewards and further insight into the identity of Sheol's minions (see below). Here I content myself with a few hints. On the significance of the (illegal!) purchase of land to bury foreigners, see Edmund Leach, *Genesis as Myth and other Essays* (London: Cape, 1969), pp. 56–57. (There is irony in the priests' avoiding the illegality of returning the money to the treasury by using it illegally to buy the cemetery.) Leach's point about burial grounds is connected to the vineyard parable at Matt. 21. The theoretical framework for understanding the significance of the transactions involving the money is provided by Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: the Form and Reasons for Archaic Exchange*, trans. W. D. Hall (London: Routledge, 1990 [1925]). Also essential, of course, are

Zech. 11.7–17 and Jer. 32, where the buying of a field legally seals Israel's inheritance in its land.

37. By 'fundamentalists' I mean those who subscribe to the two doctrines of biblical inerrancy and literal truth. Obviously there is room to maneuver with respect to these doctrines; in particular, literalists readily allow for figurative uses of language in the Bible. But what seems to them straightforward historical reportage they take to be so. Though I disagree with fundamentalists, I am not using the term pejoratively.

38. The *locus classicus* is James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (see chaps. 24–50 and 68, sec. 4 of the abridged version [New York: Macmillan, 1922]). See also George W. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

39. Paul's view is, at best, obscure. For a different reading of the critical texts, see Richard C. Carrier, "The Spiritual Body of Christ and the Legend of the Empty Tomb," in the present volume.

40. Wright glosses this telling remark of Paul's in his commentary (*The Resurrection of the Son of God*, p. 339) by saying merely, "What matters is . . . the *continuity* that Paul sees between the present life and the resurrection life . . ." [Wright's emphasis].

41. This is made quite transparent by Jon. 2.2–6, which closely echoes Ps. 16.10, quoted in turn at Acts 2.27 as a proof-text for the Resurrection claim.

42. Some may wonder whether the "great fish" is really Leviathan or just an agent of divine wrath. But these are not incompatible, given the Jewish theological view that God controls even Leviathan (Job 41, Ps. 104.245–46, Isa. 45.7). Jonah's language clearly evokes the imagery we are about to elucidate: "I called to the Lord, out of my distress, . . . out of the belly of Sheol I cried, . . . For thou didst cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood was round about me; . . . yet thou didst bring up my life from the Pit, O Lord my God" (Jon. 2.2–6). Furthermore, Jer. 51.34 clearly evokes the same imagery: Jeremiah is "swallowed" by the "dragon" Nebuchadrezzar/Babylon. The Rabbis carried this logic through in delightful fashion, holding that in the resurrection, the *risen dead* would feast on the body of Job's Leviathan (b. Talmud, Baba Bathra 74a–75a)! In any case, there can be no doubt that Matt. 12 understands the belly of the whale as a figure for the realm of death.

43. Initiation into the Qumran community was understood as a passage from the realm of death into life; i.e., as a resurrection. See Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, pp. 153–56.

44. See citations, footnote 38; also Ps. 30, 42, 86, 88, and 116.

45. Cf. Ps. 74.14, and cf. G. Widengren, "Early Hebrew Myths and their Interpretation," in *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel*, ed. S. H. Hooke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 172, and Simo Parpola, "From Whence the Beast?" *Bible Review* 15 (Dec. 1999): 24. Especially worthy of note is Widengren's argument (Ibid., pp. 169–200) that YHWH may have been said to have a consort named Anat, clearly derived from Canaanite sources. Widengren suggests that there may have been a ritual drama in which the king, playing the role of YHWH, does battle with the forces of chaos, the dragon(s) of the underworld, is mourned by Anat, reemerges from the

realm of death victorious, celebrates a sacred wedding, and is enthroned as king. Widengren further connects these motifs with the theme of birth of a royal divine child. Mowinckel, in contrast, denies that the Israelite king is ever "identified with" YHWH; see chaps. 3 and 5—"Psalms at the Enthronement Festival of Yaweh," in his *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004).

I believe that the conceptual framework I am suggesting here, in which YHWH is the "Platonic Form" of Israel, and in which the king—at least *qua* ideal king—embodies the corporate entity Israel—can provide considerable illumination concerning these conceptual difficulties, and concerning the ideological differences that are embodied in the differing ways in which Israelites, Mesopotamian cultures, and Egypt, expressed their views concerning the relationship of the king to the gods. Thus, we can begin to understand such epithets as "divine," "Son of God," "God's anointed," "God's chosen one," etc. as ways of asserting somewhat differing conceptions of the authority of a king, in terms of his jural relationship to the corporate group and its Form. This analysis effectively undermines the strained attempts of such scholars as G. E. Wright (*The Old Testament Against Its Environment* [London: SCM Press, 1950]) and H. Frankfort (*Kingship and the Gods* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948]) to demonstrate the uniquely true spirituality of Israel in contrast to the myth-dominated religions of its neighbors.

46. See Ps. 18, 69, 74, 89, and 104. Also, 2 Sam. 22, Isa. 27, 44.26–28, 45.12–23, 51.9–11; Ezek. 32.1–12; Zech. 10.6–12; Dan. 7; and Sirach 24.5–6 (where Wisdom, the source of social order, walks upon the waves). For further examples from the intertestamental period, see Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*. It is extraordinary that N. T. Wright virtually omits mention of the Psalms when he canvasses the HB for precursors to the NT conception of resurrection (Wright, *The Resurrection and the Son of God*, chap. 3); what mention there is misses the essential point.

47. A proper structural study of this complex of associated mythemes—chaos-waters versus dry land, sea-monsters versus gods and royal heroes, death versus resurrection and life, social disruption versus stability and political flourishing—would systematically survey their occurrences and juxtapositions, not only in the Bible but in the literatures of the surrounding cultures. It would look for inter- and intracultural similarities and differences, diachronic development, and association with other mythemes. That would present a daunting task, but one that I believe would reap significant insights.

In his survey of pagan ANE postmortem beliefs in *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (chaps. 1–2), Wright finds little to be learned about the Resurrection. In contrast to his earlier work, this discussion is not informed by any articulated methodological reflection of the required sort; nor does Wright provide any theoretical framework in terms of which to assess the significance of the similarities and differences we find in the various ANE traditions. Instead, he seems just to take most of this literature as straightforwardly implying various literal postmortem beliefs. A comparative treatment of these texts that is methodologically explicit and anthropologically informed has yet to be written, so far as I am aware.

Such a treatment would, to take just one example, allow us to recognize the common meanings shared by talk of victory over chaos (and the power to resist chaos), and the pan-

ANE valorization of mountaintops and high places as special places of contact with the divine. The mountains rise above the floodwaters—at Ararat, at Zion/Mt. Moriah, at Carmel and Ebal and, of course, Sinai (according to tradition). The Egyptian pyramids and Babylonian ziggurats were conceived as "mountains"; the architecture of early Israelite "high places" (*bamah* = mountain) was modeled upon Canaanite cultic sites [see B. S. J. Isserlin, *The Israelites* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998], pp. 237–38). They were the focal points around which a stable civil society was organized. In ancient Jewish tradition, conquered land is "domesticated" by erecting a "high place" or sanctuary, understood as a ritual reenactment of God's creation of the cosmos (see Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky Shlita, "Parshas Terumah," http://www.yadavraham.org/html/terumah2003.html). Worship in Israel and in ANE cultures generally was permeated with this imagery.

48. For Assyrian, Babylonian, and (earlier) Sumerian conceptions of the king and his obligation to control the dark forces of death represented by the Dragon, see Simo Parpola, "From Whence the Beast?," *Bible Review* (Dec. 1999): 24, and Parpola, "Sons of God," *Archaeology Odyssey* (Nov./Dec. 1999): 18–27 and *passim*. In Egypt, the royal gods Ra and Horus do battle with the dragon Apophis and sea monsters identified as crocodiles and hippopotomi, respectively (see *Mythologies*, comp. Yves Bonnefoy [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991], pp. 93–94, 109–10. These monsters, once again, represent the enemies and disrupters of order.)

49. See, e.g., Ivan Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), pp. 35–36 *et passim*, and Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, vol. 1, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962 [1951]), pp. 69–72, 129–30, 143–49, and 239–41. Beyond this, it is certainly possible (though the evidence is indirect and contested—see J. W. Rogerson, *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1974), esp. chap. 6, and Martin Noth, *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Studies*, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967 [1960]), chap. 5 that death/resurrection imagery was at home in coronation pageants celebrating the installation of Israelite kings, as it evidently was in the coronation rituals for, e.g., Egyptian kings. It is at least not acceptable to ignore the fact that the death/resurrection motif can be found in cultures spanning the globe in association with rites of passage.

Nor should this be surprising. In a rite of passage, an individual undergoes a social transformation in which he or she leaves behind (ceases to embody) one social status (or personage) and assumes a new one. So, one person*age* dies and a new one is born. For the ontology of social personhood, see Fales, "The Ontology of Social Roles," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 7 (1977): 139–61. For the symbolic representation of rites of passage in terms of death and resurrection, see James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. M. Vizedom and G. Caffe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), and Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), esp. chap. 4, and *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969).

50. The paradigms here, in the historical consciousness of Israel, are surely Saul and especially David.

51. It is important to note that, in this context, the judgment that persons or institu-

tions are evil does not reflect a judgment on their character, that is, on whether their intentions are evil, but is rather a judgment concerning whether the policies which they pursue are socially beneficial or dangerous. Jesus' railings against the Scribes and Pharisees are best understood to have that impersonal or consequentialist sense, I suggest—as are his strident admonitions against preserving the ties of family and kinship.

52. See, in this connection, S. G. F. Brandon, *History, Time, and Deity: A Historical and Comparative Study of the Conception of Time in Religious Thought and Practice* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1965), pp. 166–72. Brandon rightly identifies the "rulers of this age" (1 Cor. 2.6–8) with the demonic powers that inhabit the "air" (Eph. 2.2), but he fails to see that these are the heavenly templates for the mundane rulers of the present age—in Jerusalem and Rome.

53. As we shall see, fundamentalist exegetes who take this to reflect the basic veracity of the Easter morning traditions, on the grounds that the Evangelists would not have made up the story about the women, are fundamentally misguided. In their view, placing women at the tomb as first witnesses of Jesus' absence would have been damaging to their later disputes with the Jews, as Jewish law did not give the testimony of women the same legal standing as that of men. As the priority of the women could not have furthered the early Church's polemical aims, this tradition must have been preserved because it was known to be true. See, e.g., William Lane Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), pp. 188–94, and Stephen T. Davis, *Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), p. 73. This elides the disparities between the Gospels as to the identities of the women; but more importantly, it simply misses the point of giving the women this special role, which is symbolic.

Still, Matthew's wording does raise an interesting question. Why is the Virgin not identified here in the natural way as Jesus' mother? Why is she even referred to, almost insultingly, as merely "the other Mary"? Why the apparent disparagement of her blood relationship to Jesus? This is a thread that may point in the direction of Jesus' general disvaluation of familial ties (e.g., Matt. 12.46–50), and may also suggest his dismissive treatment of Mary at the Cana wedding feast (John 2.4). The latter passage does indeed bear upon my theme here: Jesus dismisses Mary because his "hour has not yet come." This implies that her presence will be required when his hour *does* come; John 13.1 and 17.1 make it clear that this hour is the time of his trial and crucifixion. The changing of water to wine at Cana itself evokes the theme of death and resurrection (compare the Eucharist and the discharge of blood and water from the crucified Jesus' breast), via its association with water-to-wine rituals in nearby Dionysian cultic centers (see Morton Smith, "On the Wine God in Palestine," in *Salo Wittmayer Baron, Jubilee Volume*, vol. 2 [Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research and New York: Columbia University Press, 1974], pp. 815–29). Smith provides evidence of an equation between water and wine within Dionysian ideology; that rituals involving the "conversion" of water to wine or "creation" of wine *ex nihilo* were celebrated at Dionysian cult centers in Greece is attested by Pausanias (*Description of Greece* 6.26, for temples at Elis and Andros) in the second century and by Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* 2.231 for Andros) in the first century. A first century treatise on hydraulics by Hero of Alexandria actually contains designs for

two temple devices for performing this feat. Early Christian awareness of this Bacchic practice is attested by Epiphanius (*Panarion* 51.30.2) for Cibyra and Gerasa, and is confirmed by archeological evidence for Gerasa and Corinth (C. H. Kraeling, *Gerasa City of the Decapolis* [New Haven, CT: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1938], pp. 63, 212, and C. Bonner, "A Dionysiac Miracle at Corinth," *American Journal of Archaeology* 33 [1929]: 368–75).

54. Other ANE examples are enumerated by Adela Yarbro Collins in "The Empty Tomb and the Gospel According to Mark," in *Hermes and Athena: Biblical Exegesis and Philosophical Theology*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Thomas P. Flint (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993). Collins notes the role of Thetis in ministering to her son Achilles upon his death (and presumed resurrection) in the *Aithiopis*, a continuation of the *Iliad*. Matthew would surely have been familiar with the latter, which may even have served—see Dennis R. Macdonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000)—as a literary model for Mark; and may have known the former work. In Virgil's *Aeneid*—possibly also known to the Evangelists—Aeneus's descent into the underworld occurs under the protection and guidance of his patron goddess, Venus (*Aeneid* 6.190–207).

55. See Hos. 13.13, and the Qumran scroll 1QH 3.6–18; esp. lines 8–10: "For the children have come to the throes of Death, and she labors in her pains who bears a Man. For amid the throes of Death she shall bring forth a man-child, and amid the pains of Hell there shall spring from her child-bearing crucible a Marvelous Mighty Counselor; and a man shall be delivered from out of the throes." See *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 3rd ed., trans. Geza Vermes (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 173ff. See also Richard C. Carrier, "The Spiritual Body of Christ and the Legend of the Empty Tomb," in the present volume, nn235, 287, and 298 for more on possible symbolic dimensions.

56. On the close association in African and ANE kingship rituals between anointment, symbolic death/rebirth as divine, and coronation, see Raphael Patai, *On Jewish Folklore* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), chap. 9, esp. pp. 125–26. See also, e.g., Luke 22:53.

57. Jesus' supposed crime was blasphemy. He was tried by a Jewish court and convicted under Jewish law. The question whether the Jewish authorities had and would have used the right to execute Jews convicted of capital offenses under Jewish law at this time has been disputed. If so, Jesus would have been stoned to death by the order of the Sanhedrin, rather than being hauled before Pilate on a trumped-up charge of sedition. For a defense of that view, see Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1961); and see esp. pp. 75–90, for details of the manifold historical improbabilities contained in the Gospel accounts of the trial. For a different view, see Richard C. Carrier, "The Burial of Jesus in the Light of Jewish Law," in the present volume.

58. In Matthew, the robe's color is given as scarlet (κοκκινος); Mark and John are more brazen and specify the color as purple (πορπηρα or πορπηρους). Both are royal colors, but during this period, wearing the latter was almost exclusively the prerogative of the emperor—so L. B. Jensen, "Royal Purple of Tyre," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 22 (1963): 104–18. But see Meyer Reinhold, *History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity* (Brussels: Collection Latomus, 1970), who argues that the use of purple as a royal status symbol originated in the

east, and that it was more widespread (with, however, restrictions introduced by Nero and Caligula) in Roman times. In any case, the allusion to rulership of the Imperium seems hard to deny.

59. See M. Eugene Boring on Matt. 26.17 in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 8, ed. Leander E. Keck et al. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), p. 468.

60. Richard Carrier has suggested to me that a dawn ascent from the grave would carry considerable symbolic significance. I shall not pursue that suggestion here, but compare the imagery of Ezek. 43.1–9 and 44.1–3. For further discussion, see Carrier, "The Plausibility of Theft," in the present volume.

61. In contravention of the standard procedures of the Great Sanhedrin: see Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus*, esp. pp. 20–30. The difficulties of historical reconstruction are circumvented if we drop the assumption that the Evangelists were purporting to give their readers a straightforward factual narrative. Indeed, the numerous irregularities and illegalities implied by the Gospel accounts of the actions of the Jewish authorities during the passion would have served to highlight the Evangelists' portrayal of the legitimacy of the Jewish hierarchy as forfeit. So far from meriting the rulership of Israel as heirs to the Mosaic covenant, they are not even competent administrators of the law.

62. Hints about these matters are given in nn30 and 60.

63. This in spite of the fact that, according to Matthew and the other Evangelists, Jesus has repeatedly told them what death he was to die, why he must die, and that he would be raised. Not only that: they've witnessed the raising of Lazarus and Jairus' daughter.

William Craig, Stephen Davis, and others go further and argue, not only that the Easter appearances occurred, but that their occurrence can only be plausibly explained by supposing that Jesus really *was* resurrected and really *did* put in a series of physical appearances. The alternatives, they think, are fraud or self-deception (i.e., multiple hallucinations). Liberal scholars often take a different tack: there was a series of post-Easter visions or "manifestations" of Jesus which restored the faith of the disciples, but these were inner, spiritual experiences whose objective basis, if any, transcends historical or scientific investigation and is an object of "faith." That there were disciples who had subjective, transformative experiences is not impossible—but this proposal is quite unnecessary.

64. Such claims and movements characteristically crop up in the context of groups that are socially marginalized or have experienced severe collective trauma of some other kind that threatens the continued existence of the group (see Michael Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974]). The phenomenon has been observed across cultures, from the Cargo Cults of Melanesia to the Ghost Dance movement among the Plains Indians. One should not make the mistake of assuming that "acceptance" of a vision-claim made by another must involve believing that he or she has literally been in contact with some transcendent or otherworldly reality. Such claims, and their acceptance, may mean simply and precisely the recognition of an individual as capable of leading: of possessing insight into difficulties confronting the group and promising solutions, and of possessing those personal qualities that make for effective leadership. For more on this subject, see I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession* (New York: Routledge,

1989), and Evan Fales, "Scientific Explanations of Mystical Experiences, Part I: The Case of St. Teresa," *Religious Studies* 32 (1996): 143–63; "Scientific Explanations of Mystical Experiences, Part II: The Challenge to Theism," *Religious Studies* 32 (1996): 297–313; and "Can Science Explain Mysticism?" *Religious Studies* 35 (1999): 213–27. All these works contain substantial bibliographies to the literature on the neurophysiology, psychology, and sociology of mystical and visionary experiences.

65. N. T. Wright makes it clear that the soteriological significance of belief in resurrection in first-century Judea was understood politically and in terms of the reconstitution of an independent Israel (*The New Testament and the People of God*, esp. pp. 188–200 and 320–34). In his *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Wright claims that this also involved a belief in literal resurrection. Cf.—so Richard Carrier—b. Talmud, Sanhedrin 92b. See also George Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*.

66. See especially nn36 and 48. Not to be coy, but let me suggest that the coronation of Jesus as heir-(un)apparent to the Roman throne needs to be taken seriously. Roman political theory was in disarray. The Caesars, who craved the ancient title 'Rex,' could not find a legal basis for assuming that role (Carin Green, personal communication). Legitimacy was notoriously a matter simply of victory over competitors. At an even more fundamental level, Rome had never developed (in spite of Virgil's efforts in the *Aeneid*) a political theory adequate to its de facto transition from a tribal society to empire. The genius of the early Christians, I suggest, was to have developed a narrative that could explain and legitimate just such a transition, in the form of the story of the transformation of a paradigmatic Jewish king into a legitimate Roman emperor, and of Rome itself into a justly ordered transtribal community whose servant that emperor properly was. In so doing, the Christians offered both to Roman society and to Israel a means of salvation. That would explain Eusebius' striking hints, e.g., in *The Life of the Blessed Emperor Constantine*, 3.15, that the Emperor is none other than the *parousia*.

67. I am deeply indebted to Richard Carrier and Lydia McGrew for their careful reading of this paper and persistence in demanding evidence. Though they will certainly dispute many of my conclusions, they have immensely improved the final result.

9

THE PLAUSIBILITY OF THEFT

RICHARD C. CARRIER

Elsewhere I have argued that the original Christians probably did not believe Jesus was literally resurrected from the grave, but that this belief arose as a consequence of the legendary development of an empty tomb story. I think that is the best account of the facts as we have them. But there are still other accounts that remain at least as good as the supernatural alternative. So even if the empty tomb story is not a legend, it is not necessary to conclude that only a genuine resurrection would explain it.

One prominent natural explanation is theft of the body.[1] Another, which I developed in a preceding chapter, is that the body was legally moved without the knowledge of the disciples. But the present essay demonstrates the plausibility (but by no means the certainty) of the hypothesis that the body of Jesus was stolen. In the process, it also presents several reasons to doubt Matthew's claim that the tomb of Jesus was guarded, including the fact that the entire episode bears apparent and deliberate parallels with the story of Daniel in the lion's den. Since the body of Jesus might actually have been stolen, the subsequent story of his resurrection could have been the erroneous deduction or deliberate propaganda of the earliest Christians.[2] Therefore, we cannot conclude with any certainty that Jesus was miraculously raised from the dead.

THE HYPOTHESIS OF THEFT

On the hypothesis of theft, Evangelical apologist William Lane Craig has written:

> To my knowledge, the only naturalistic explanation of the empty tomb that deserves any consideration is the suggestion that some third party stole the body. The famous Nazareth inscription seems to imply that tomb robbery was a widespread problem in first-century Palestine. It could be that some unknown person or persons broke into the tomb and absconded with the body.[3]

Against this he says there "is no positive evidence for this hypothesis, so to that extent it is a mere assertion," although it is not a mere assertion if tomb robbing was, as he admits, a real possibility in that very time and place, and since a great many causes in history have no evidence for them but their effects, it follows that a hypothesis that explains a fact cannot be rejected out of hand. This is especially the case when we have no reason to expect positive evidence to survive, and certainly an anonymous secret crime would be very unlikely to produce any evidence at all. But Craig does offer six "positive considerations against" the hypothesis, which I believe encompass all the objections anyone might raise that are worthy of attention.

First, Craig says we don't know anyone who would have a motive to do it. But the Nazareth decree that Craig himself cites implies theft of bodies was an active concern, so clearly some motive existed, whatever it was.[4] One general motive we know of is that the body parts (especially, it seems, of a holy or crucified man), along with such things as crucifixion nails, were valuable for necromancy. "Since necromancers were, almost by necessity, body snatchers, they came into conflict with the laws against desecrating tombs." In fact, people of the time believed corpses had to be guarded to prevent theft by witches, who used corpses or body parts in their magic.[5] Though corpses used specifically in curse spells technically did not have to be moved, they sometimes were. For example, Tacitus describes how "the remains of human bodies" were found along with curse paraphernalia in the quarters of Germanicus.[6] But besides their use in curses, surviving magical papyri disclose other uses that did require bodysnatching, e.g., one could ask questions of the dead by inserting inscribed scrolls into the corpse's mouth,[7] and the value

of having a holy man's skull to ask questions of would be clear to any enterprising sorcerer. Corpses could also feature in the most powerful forms of love spell, the *agôgê*.[8] Other rites required a skull, or the "heart of one untimely dead."[9] Thus, sorcerers would have a motive to steal any body, and perhaps an even greater motive to steal the body of a holy man, possibly a miracle worker, who was certainly untimely dead.

Other motives are available. Matthew 27:63–64 has the Jews claim that the disciples had a motive to steal the body, a charge also put in the mouth of the Jew in Justin's *Trypho*: "his disciples stole him by night from the tomb, where he was laid when unfastened from the cross, and now deceive men by asserting that he has risen from the dead and ascended to heaven" (108). Matthew's own account is duplicated in the so-called Acts of Pilate in the Gospel of Nicodemus (1.13), and in the *Diatessaron* 53.28. Tertullian not only repeats the same motive, but adds another that is quite curious: "This is He whom His disciples secretly stole away, that it might be said He had risen again, or the gardener abstracted, that his lettuces might come to no harm from the crowds of visitants!" *De Spectaculis* 30. The absurdity of an annoyed or vindictive gardener-turned-bodysnatcher seems a joke, possibly one that went right over the head of a humorless Tertullian. Yet it was apparently taken seriously by John (20:15), as well as Tatian when he compiled the *Diatessaron*, since they have Mary, *after* supposing Jesus to be the *gardener*, actually asking *him* what he did with the body, thus presuming a gardener would have reason to move one. Even if this attests, via Christian apologetic responses, to yet another Jewish polemic extant at least in the second century, then someone must have thought it plausible that a gardener had some motive to take the body, whether the petty motive alleged by Tertullian or some other.

Even if the reported charge of theft is an invention or a legend, it still proves a motive was conceivable. And this motive is, after all, quite logical. For this or a similar motive may have led to one disciple, or any other follower or admirer, stealing the body without the knowledge of the others, to bring about the very effect the Jews allege. The point of such a trick would be to inspire faith in the good teachings of Jesus and to restore his good name: for despite being crucified like a common criminal, if God took him up to heaven, as an empty tomb would help "prove," this would completely vindicate Jesus as a holy man of God, and his teachings as divine and

worthy.[10] From among what may have been over seventy people in Jesus' entourage, it is not improbable that at least one of them would be willing to engage such a pious deceit. It is quite possible the thief or thieves had no idea the extent to which the resurrection credo would get out of hand after many decades of ideology became attached to it, all but eclipsing what really mattered to them: the moral doctrines of a beloved rabbi. So Craig's first objection fails.

Second, Craig claims that "no one but Joseph, those with him and the women initially knew exactly where the tomb was." Of course, the thief could have been someone in Joseph's party, and we really don't know who was with Joseph or who else may have surreptitiously followed the party, or who may have found out its location by asking someone in the party (by casual inquiry or bribery), so this is a fairly hollow objection. Thieves with a design to steal the body of a holy man would surely keep an eye on their prize, and there is no reason to expect they would be mentioned in any accounts. Moreover, first, Matthew assumes that the location was known well enough that a guard could be placed there, and second, grave robbers looking for bodies may have simply stumbled on a new fresh grave—they could even have cased graveyards to spy new arrivals. So Craig's second objection fails.

Third, Craig claims that it "strains credulity" that a theft could be pulled off unnoticed in a time span of only thirty-six hours. This is a rather specious argument. Thieves had two entire nights to effect a theft, as well as the circumstances of a Passover Sabbath, when most people would be home and few would be found about graveyards or anywhere on any business.[11] Even a spontaneous plan or accidental discovery would see success in such circumstances. There could hardly be better conditions, and a plan already worked out in advance would be even more likely to succeed. Lest one argue that Jews would not steal on the Sabbath, grave robbers would not likely be Jews, and by their profession they are already breaking the law, so violating the Sabbath would hardly be worse. And if the theft had a pious intent (restoring the good name of Jesus against the wicked machinations of the Jewish elite and instilling faith in his moral and salvific teachings), then it could well have been viewed as moral, for Jesus himself said "it is lawful to do good on the sabbath" (Mark 3:4), and it is well known that fanatics can justify almost any crime as righteous. But it is even asking too much to suppose that everyone in Jesus' company was a paragon of moral virtue. Many

people in all ages and places see the good in breaking laws for a greater cause, and there could well have been at least one such person among the many who would have the motive. So Craig's third objection fails.

Fourth, Craig says "the presence of grave clothes in the tomb . . . seems to preclude theft of the body." Of course, John does not report the presence of *clothes*, but of some "linen cloths" and a "napkin" for the face,[12] and since bodysnatchers want body parts, these items could simply have been left behind, whereas a pious thief would want to create the illusion of an ascension, so they might *deliberately* leave such items behind. So their presence does not argue against theft. However, the very mention of these cloths is a natural embellishment to such a narrative and thus cannot be trusted as historical. Any historian's dramatic description of a historical scene in antiquity included plausible details that actually have no source except the historian's imagination. For example, when battles were described in antiquity, vivid details might be given of sword blows and conversations, which the author invents—not to lie, but to paint an engaging yet plausible scene. We have to be especially wary of such license, for embellishments are very common when one or two generations of oral tradition have intervened between the events and their written record, and when scenes are being described in vivid detail for deliberate dramatic effect, rather than as bare historical facts. Since Mark and Matthew do not mention such cloths, and their presence is clearly a dramatic element in Luke and John, it is not likely a genuine detail. So Craig's fourth objection fails.

Fifth, Craig says "conspiracies" tend to come to light. Of course, this does not even address necromantic grave robbing, which would involve no conspiracy and would be extremely unlikely ever to come to light. Criminals are not in the habit of announcing their crimes, especially capital ones, and it is possible that the thieves may not have even realized whose body they stole. Likewise, the sort of action involved in a pious theft does not require a conspiracy at all: merely a simple theft, which could be accomplished by one or two persons, whose very purpose in performing the theft would be destroyed (along with their lives and good names) if the truth came out, even to the other disciples.

There is rarely any difficulty for one or two people to keep quiet, especially when it means everything to them, and history hardly proves that such secrets tend to come to light. To the contrary, historians are all too often frus-

trated by the silence such secrecy easily creates. Comparisons with modern "scandals" like Iran-Contra and Watergate[13] only prove the point: not only were these events spectacularly atypical, but *none* of the institutions or technologies that "broke" those secrets existed in antiquity. There was no press, much less a free press, nor did forensic science exist, or tape recordings, or even detectives, and certainly no massive billion-dollar political machines hell-bent on exposing the lie. Instead, we are talking about an age of near-universal illiteracy and superstition, in a relative backwater of the Roman Empire. Even detectives hot on the trail of crimes today must accept that most will never be solved. Imagine how much worse it would be if they had none of their modern resources, methods, or technologies. Obviously, getting away with it would not be remarkable. So Craig's fifth objection fails.

Finally, Craig says the theft theory fails to explain the appearances of Jesus, and so the resurrection theory, by explaining two facts, has more explanatory scope. However, greater explanatory scope is not sufficient for one theory to be more credible than another. For example, the theory that alien visitors are responsible, in whole or in part, for all monumental and other unusual ancient architecture,[14] has far more explanatory scope than any natural theories, which are by contrast many and varied and much more complex, yet surely Craig would not argue we should believe that aliens are the cause. Craig knows very well that to establish a historical fact, at least *six* criteria must be met, of which explanatory scope is but one, and at least a majority of these criteria must be met *overwhelmingly* against competitors in order to justify steady confidence in the conclusion.[15]

There is simply nothing improbable in an empty tomb being the result of a theft, which then is linked with, or even inspires (by leaving the suggestion of an ascension or escape in people's minds),[16] independent reports of appearances, especially appearances of a visionary kind, such as that which converted Paul. The physicality of appearances in the Gospels can be a doctrinal and legendary development (as I argue in another chapter), considering that appearances are wholly absent from the earliest Gospel (Mark, sans the late, added endings), and nothing in the epistles entails physical appearances (everything there can be consistently interpreted with little difficulty as fitting visions).[17] Indeed, mere rumor can start legends of postmortem appearances almost immediately, as is suggested in Lucian's essay *The Death of Peregrinus* (39). This is not the place to delve into a thorough examination of the

evidence for any particular hypothesis explaining the appearances.[18] Rather, Craig must surely accept that two facts can have separate explanations, separate causes. On the other hand, for resurrection to be true, Christian Theism must also be true, and yet Christian Theism faces tremendous problems regarding plausibility, disconfirmation, and evidential support, and resorts to ad hoc solutions to observations and theoretical concepts that are difficult to explain or reconcile. The idea that the body of Jesus was stolen faces none of these problems. So this last objection also fails.

We've seen that none of Craig's six objections to the possibility of theft carries any weight. Consequently, Craig cannot claim that "no plausible naturalistic explanation is yet available for the fact of the empty tomb."

COULD CHRISTIANITY HAVE CONTINUED IF A THEFT WERE DISCOVERED?

Related to his fifth point above, Craig says elsewhere that we should expect "at least rumor" of a theft, and yet "we find no trace of this whatever in any of the traditions."[19] But in fact we *do* find this: Matthew claims the rumor existed at least in his own day (28:15), and as noted above it was repeated in at least three other texts. But can we take this further? Perhaps Craig's fifth argument can be turned on its head:

What if the theft was indeed brought to light? Imagine, for example, that what the guards said (28:13–15) was not a lie after all, but the truth. This might have forced certain fanatical Christians, probably not involved in the theft themselves, to concoct the Jewish conspiracy theory in order to dismiss the charge, a tactic employed by many a cult throughout history when faced with evidence it can't accept. So the existence of the rumor of theft, refuted by a fantastical story in Matthew, could be evidence that theft actually occurred and *was discovered*. In antiquity, forensic evidence of theft would be next to nil, so the discovery would have become a case of we-said versus they-said, pitting a few disciples against the hated Jewish elite. It seems obvious with whom the devout would side. They would sooner believe a trumped-up story like Matthew's than even the eyewitness of the Sanhedrin or their lackeys.

If this sounds incredible, consider the fact that it has happened too many

times in history to dismiss. One need only consider the accusations today that the government "covers up" the truth about UFOs, so all contrary evidence can be dismissed as fabrications. I have heard the same charges leveled against NASA regarding the "face" on Mars and the supposedly "faked" moon landings, and similar "conspiracy theory" denials were made by followers of David Koresh when presented with testimony that he molested children. And yet this is in an enlightened age of science, cynicism, near universal literacy, and mass media. How much more easily would such denials spread among the faithful in a superstitious, illiterate, class-torn society? Two particularly famous cases will even more soundly prove this point.

Consider the Heaven's Gate cult. This sect banked everything on a "report" of a spacecraft being sighted behind comet Hale-Bopp, a story that began with just one man, Chuck Shramek, who claimed he had photographed it. Alan Hale, one of the comet's discoverers, went on a campaign to prove to everyone that Shramek's interpretation of the photo was faulty, presenting numerous additional photographs and explaining the flaws in Shramek's. Did this destroy the cult? Far from it. Hale was called "an Earth traitor" and dismissed. Believers argued he would not have tried so hard to debunk the claim unless he secretly knew it was true and wanted to keep it secret. Thirty-nine members of this group continued to believe so firmly the spaceship was there, despite mass-media-scale evidence against it, that they gave their lives for it, committing suicide to "shed their containers" and let their souls be taken up into the "Kingdom of Heaven" by the spaceship.[20] This is eerily similar to the case in Matthew: like the Heaven's Gaters, Matthew blames the accusation on the Jews' intense desire to conceal the truth.

Consider, in turn, the Jim Jones massacre: even many *eyewitness survivors* of the Jonestown suicides denied what had really happened, and instead told stories of hoards of CIA agents machine-gunning hundreds of people. Even when presented with evidence that almost none of the bodies had bullet wounds (apart from a handful, who all died from a single gunshot to the head delivered by pistols they themselves fired), and that almost all had died from poisoned punch taken orally, these people accused the government of fabricating the evidence and paying off the forensic doctors (just as Matthew accuses the Jews of paying off the guards).[21] So we cannot presume devout Christians, once inspired to believe in the resurrection of their beloved leader, would give up their faith if a pious or other theft were eventually "found out"

by the authorities. To the contrary, we might expect exactly the reaction we find in Matthew.

Two objections might be raised against this possibility. First, People's Temple and Heaven's Gate, though still counting a few followers, did not explode into a Great World Religion like Christianity. But this only means they were born in infertile soil. Christianity, by contrast, found itself in ideal social conditions for growth. And only a rare few religions are lucky enough to triumph anyway—like Buddhism and Islam, despite these being false religions from the point of view of anyone who believes in the resurrection of Jesus. Moreover, People's Temple and Heaven's Gate became famous for their mass suicides, but several religions with thousands of adherents have similar origins in recent legends based on denied facts. Rastafarianism is a good example: Ethiopian king Ras Tafari was regarded by many as a descendant of King David (a "King of Kings," just like Jesus), and he was deified in life, despite his own public and repeated denials of his divinity (and assertions of his own Christian faith). His death in 1975 did not dissuade anyone: begun in 1930, the religion is still going strong.[22] Thus, that Christianity could begin from similarly contested facts is neither unprecedented nor inconceivable.

Second, wouldn't some other record survive? This does not appear likely. We cannot expect any other evidence of a discovered theft to survive. We have no texts attacking Christianity from the first century, not even fabrications or slanders, which proves that Christianity at its start was too tiny a sect to end up on anyone's literary radar—or else, if it was noticed by any author of the period, we can see that no such texts survived. And though several Christian sources refer to the Jewish accusation of theft, no *Jewish* texts survive containing that charge. Thus, clearly that accusation could exist without surviving in any other document (and it is not likely Christians would have preserved such a document anyway). We can also observe analogous cases: despite numerous 'imposters' leading hundreds if not thousands of Jews to their deaths and horribly worsening Jewish-Roman tensions, Josephus alone preserves any record of most of them, and it is already fortuitous that the works of Josephus were preserved at all. That record could have easily vanished altogether, and certainly many similar events have indeed been lost forever, as Josephus surely did not cover every similar story. It is even possible that Josephus *did* record the theft accusation, which was then erased by the Christian editor of the famous *Testimonium Flavianum*.[23]

THE GUARDED TOMB

In a footnote Craig briefly remarks that the theft hypothesis must assume the guard story given in Matthew is false. But we do not need to *assume* it, for there are several positive reasons to disbelieve it. Of course, one should note right away that the very thought that a guard was needed would entail that theft of the body was a real possibility and thus not implausible. It also entails accepting, as the story explicitly states (Matt. 27:63–64) and also requires to make sense, that Jesus really did predict his resurrection before his death, thus priming his disciples to expect it. But more importantly, the fact that the guard was not even placed until sometime Saturday (Matt. 27:62–65) means the whole night and part of the morning would still have been available for the unguarded body to be stolen. For in the account given, the Jews were evidently satisfied by the fact the stone appeared unmoved (or they could not legally move it): for no one is said to have checked to see if the tomb was already empty—the closed tomb simply had a seal and guard placed on it (Matt. 27:66). So even if the story of guards is *true* it does little to argue against the possibility of theft. Likewise, Matthew clearly thought it not improbable that thieves could make off with the body even as the guards slept (28:13), otherwise the "cover story" the guards were to use would have been useless. Even if the story is a fiction, it is not likely Matthew would invent an excuse he knew no one would believe (strangely, Matthew also seems to assume Jesus got out of the tomb without the guards noticing—indeed, without even opening the tomb—though he might have imagined some sort of divine teleportation). Likewise, Matthew has no problem showing the guards taking bribes to lie (28:12–15), so it is hardly incredible that they might take bribes to allow the theft—or indeed, taking both bribes and being twice the richer for it.

But it is unlikely any guard was placed on the tomb. First, Matthew alone places them there (28:4), while the other three Gospel accounts entail their absence: the tomb is already open when the women first arrive, and they approach and enter without any challenge or opposition by guards, and naturally none are mentioned (cf. Mark 16:4, Luke 24:2, John 20:1, and surrounding material). Craig's theory that the women did not arrive until *after* the angel appeared and the guards left is not credible.[24] First, it takes specious liberties with the narrative, e.g., the guards were "like dead men" when

the angel spoke to the women (28:4–5), and did not leave until afterward (28:11). So it is incredible that no other author knows of this. Second, on his theory there could then be no source for Matthew's account: since the guards lied and the women weren't there, who saw the angel descend and the guards become like dead men?

Craig has also claimed that a version of the guard story in the apocryphal Gospel of Peter "may well be independent of Matthew, since the verbal similarities are practically nil."[25] However: (1) this is false—the phrase "lest the disciples come and steal him away" (Matt. 27:64, Pet. 8:30) is absolutely verbatim in both texts, an impossible coincidence; and (2) literary borrowing in antiquity often did not involve repeating the same words, but creatively retelling or embellishing, so lack of direct verbal parallels does not exclude borrowing. We know the author of Peter borrowed from all four Gospels and thus knew of their contents, so there is no basis for saying Peter's account of the guard is independent.

Second, typical of the genre of fiction, Matthew's story involves reporting secret conversations no Christian source would likely be privy to (27:62–65, 28:11–15). And third, the story has an overt apologetic purpose: to counter accusations that the body was stolen (28:14–15).[26] For how could the body have been stolen if the tomb was guarded? Thus, Matthew plainly tells us he has at least one motive for inventing this story of a guard. Craig attempts to bypass this point by arguing that if the Christians invented a guard to refute the Jewish charge of theft, the Jews would respond by denying there were guards, rather than further inventing the excuse that they were asleep, so (the argument goes) the guards must have been genuine.[27] But most Jews would be in no position to know whether there were guards, so a denial would be risky, and unfruitful. Since they didn't know, a "maybe there were no guards" argument would be insufficient to rebut the Christian story. In contrast, turning the apologetic on its head ("they could have or must have been sleeping") is a safe response, far more typical of a polemical skeptic, since this *does* throw the Christian story in doubt, without assuming anything beyond established human nature.

DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN

So we have three good reasons to doubt there were guards at the tomb of Jesus. But there is a fourth reason that clinches the case, and like the others it further supports the hypothesis that the story is a deliberate fiction: the entire story of the guards links the tomb of Jesus with Daniel in the lion's den, a popular symbol of resurrection (and of Jesus) among early Christians.[28] When Daniel was entombed with the lions, and thus facing certain death, King Darius placed a seal on the stone "so that nothing might be changed in regard to Daniel" (Dan. 6:17), exactly the same purpose of the Jews in Matthew. In Matthew the placing of the seal is described with the very same verb used in the Septuagint version of the Daniel story: *sphragizô*. Thus, Jesus, facing real death, and sealed in the den like Daniel, would, like Daniel, escape death by divine miracle, defying the seals of man.

The parallels are too dense to be accidental: like the women who visit the tomb of Jesus, the king visits the tomb of Daniel at the break of dawn (6:19); the escape of Jesus signified eternal life, and Daniel at the same dramatic moment wished the king eternal life (6:21; cf. 6:26); in both stories, an angel performs the key miracle (Matt. 28:2, Dan. 6:22); after this miracle, the guards curiously become "like dead men," just as Daniel's accusers are thrown to the lions and killed (6:24). The odd choice of the phrase "like dead men" thus becomes explicable as an allusion to these victims. The angel's description is also a clue to the Danielic parallel: in the Septuagint version of Daniel 7:14, an angel is described as *kai to enduma autou hôsei chiôn leukon*, "and his garment [was] white as if snow"; in Matthew 28:3, the angel is described as *kai to enduma autou leukon hôs chiôn*, "and his garment [was] white as snow," every word identical but one (and that a cognate), and every word but one in the same order. Another angel in Daniel 10:6 is described as *to prosôpon autou hôsei horasis astrapês*, "his outward appearance [was] as if a vision of lightning" while the angel in Matthew is similar: *eidea autou hôs astrapê*, "his appearance [was] as lightning." The imagery is clearly a Danielic marker.

Furthermore, Matthew alone among the Gospels ends his story with a particular commission from Jesus (28:18–20) that matches many details of the ending of the Septuagint version of Daniel's adventure in the den: God's power extends "in heaven and on earth," to "go and make disciples of all nations" and teach them to observe the Lord's commands, for Jesus is with

them "always" even "unto the end." And so King Darius, after the rescue of Daniel, sends forth a decree "to all nations" commanding reverence for God, who lives and reigns "always" even "unto the end," with power "in heaven and on earth" (Dan. 6:25–28).[29] The Greek phrase here is even identical in both cases. The stories thus have nearly identical endings. Indeed, the king's decree in Daniel reads like a model for the Gospel itself:

> Then king Darius wrote unto all the peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, that in all the dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed; and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. (Daniel 6:25–27)

In fact, the episodes are framed the same: in both Matthew and the Septuagint text of Daniel the stories have in their first verse the verb "to seal" (*sphragizô*), and in their last the noun "age" or "eon" (*aiôn*, Daniel says "Oh king, live through all ages"; Darius decrees "He is the living God through all ages," Jesus says "I am with you through all days until the end of the age"). Equally crucial is the fact that in the earliest Christian artwork, Daniel was associated with the Persian magi.[30] Of course, the whole story of Daniel takes place in Persia, and the book of Daniel is the only book in the whole Bible to mention *magi*, except Matthew, who alone among the Evangelists depicts magi visiting the Christ at birth (2:1–12). It seems an unlikely coincidence. It makes perfect sense that Matthew, who intends to close his Gospel with a Danielic parallel, should introduce his Gospel with an allusion to the context of Daniel, linking Jesus with him both in birth and in death (as well as resurrection), and this further confirms Matthew's intent to turn the tomb of Jesus into the lion's den of Daniel.

Since the placing of a seal is essential to creating the Danielic parallel, Matthew has a motive for inventing the entire motif of the guards in order to create the pretext, not only for the sealing, but for the clue of "becoming like dead men" and the angelic "miracle." Since Matthew alone mentions guards, while the other Gospels contradict such an idea, and Matthew alone uses a Danielic motif in the beginning and end of his Gospel, invention of

the guards is the best explanation of all the facts at hand. Matthew may have also seen the advantage his story held as an apologetic answer to accusations of theft and so used it to a double purpose—indeed, possibly a triple purpose, since the guard-placing account involves the Sanhedrin both holding a meeting and placing a seal on a tomb on the Sabbath (a Passover Sabbath no less), two actions prohibited by Jewish law. Thus, Matthew shows them violating the Sabbath to try and thwart the good news, a deliberate contrast with the synoptic report that they attacked Jesus for violating the Sabbath to *do* good instead (12:1–14).

In support of this contrast being intended, of the four Gospels, Matthew alone emphasizes this theme of doing good on the Sabbath by putting all Sabbath-related stories into one event in chapter 12 (which Mark, Luke, and John spread out into two or more events), and by omitting reference to the Sabbath in Jesus' travels everywhere else except here and in the Passion Narrative, suggesting a relationship between the two. Likewise, Matthew, more than any other, builds a consistent contrast between hypocrisy and discipleship.[31] So the opportunity to turn his Danielic parallel into an apologetic coup as well as an attack on Jewish hypocrisy probably molded the precise form of the story we have. This explains the otherwise strange fact that Matthew has the guard placed on Saturday rather than Friday. It also explains his peculiar use of "the day after the preparation" instead of "the Sabbath," for Matthew's Jewish audience would certainly know what that means: that the Pharisees failed to make this *particular* "preparation" on the Day of Preparation set aside by God for doing just that.

In the end, all six of MacDonald's criteria[32] for literary remodeling are met here: the text being imitated (the Septuagint) was well-known and frequently used this way, the comparison of Jesus with Daniel was a common one, there are several significant parallels, the parallels appear in the same order, the connection is confirmed by peculiar features (direct borrowing of phrases, unusual description of the guards), and the whole device reveals an obvious, intelligible and appropriate meaning. Indeed, the story becomes interpretable, with obscure and seemingly confused features suddenly making perfect sense.

As further support for the hypothesis of fiction, of the four Evangelists, Matthew appears to be the most willing to import the fabulous into his accounts. For example, there is the earthquake, recorded nowhere else, even

though it split rocks, 27:51; the hoard of undead descending on Jerusalem, 27:52–53; and the fable concerning Herod and the killing of the babies, 2:16, a legendary motif attached to kings and great men for centuries before Jesus, from Oedipus and Cypselos of Corinth, to Krishna, Moses, Sargon, Cyrus, Romulus, and others.[33] Rather than argue for these as falsehoods here, it need only be observed that these are prima facie fantastical events with a legendary ring, which are absent from the other three Gospel accounts and uncorroborated in any independent source despite their enormously public nature. Therefore, that Matthew is prone to fictionalizing events best explains the presence of all these unique elements, including his equally unique and incredible version of the empty tomb story.

Contrary to this conclusion, Craig claims that there is evidence of a pre-Matthean tradition behind his guard story,[34] but his evidence is far less persuasive. First, the reference to a tradition in 28:15 is precisely part of Matthew's apologetic aim: to invent a tale to counter the charge of theft, and to credit the Jews with evildoing, e.g., lying, bribery, and violating the Sabbath. It thus does not prove there was any *real* tradition of a guard, although someone before Matthew might already have invented guards as an apologetic response anyway. Second, the phrase "chief priests and Pharisees" is not unique to this story but appears elsewhere verbatim in Matthew (21:45) as Craig himself admits, and these two groups are key to Matthew's story: it is the chief priests whom Herod consults after the visit by the magi (2:4), and it is the Pharisees who question Jesus about the Sabbath (12:2), so these are the two groups who most symbolically frame the meaning of the tale of the guard.

Third, the words Craig claims are "*hapax legomena* for the New Testament" are either nothing of the kind (*epaurion*, *paraskeuê*, *planos*) or are explained by Matthew's unique story and employment of a Danielic parallel (*sphragizô*, *asphalizô*, *koustôdia*). None of this is unusual enough to suggest Matthew is borrowing these words from someone else. The word *epaurion* appears in Mark 11:12 and repeatedly in John and Acts, and it is a commonplace in the Septuagint, whose language Matthew often uses; *paraskeuê* appears in Mark 15:42, Luke 23:54, and John 19:14, 19:31—its use here by Matthew underscores the fact that the Jews forewent the proper day of preparation when they ought to have made these arrangements, and violated the Sabbath instead; and *planos* appears in John 7:12 and throughout the epistles and the Septuagint, while the verbal form is commonplace throughout the Gospels, and in Matthew more

than any other author—its use here is obviously a deliberate irony (the deceivers who end the story with a grand deceit call Christ a deceiver and the Resurrection a deceit). The only words that are unique are *koustôdia*, "guard," and *asphalizô*, "to secure," which is not surprising since the story of a guard securing something is uniquely Matthew's—and, of course, *sphragizô*, which is a deliberate hallmark of the Danielic meaning of the text.

CONCLUSION

The only conclusion left is that Craig is wrong: theft of the body *is* plausible, in both a general and a specific sense. In general, theft of a body, especially that of a crucified holy man, is the sort of thing that happened with some frequency at the time. In contrast, we cannot say the same about miraculous resurrections. But more specifically, theft cannot be ruled out in the case of Jesus, there being no good evidence against it, and plenty of means, motive, and opportunity for it. So theft not only remains a live option for explaining an empty tomb, but it is also more antecedently probable as an explanation than a miraculous resurrection.[35]

Of course we cannot know whether the body of Jesus was stolen, since all direct evidence has been erased by secrecy and time. But there is little justification for resorting to a supernatural explanation. For we know too little about what actually happened that weekend in Jerusalem nearly two thousand years ago, and we have no good evidence that any form of supernaturalism is true.[36] To argue that the tomb was empty because Jesus was raised from the dead requires a lot of very reliable evidence that simply isn't available. All the evidence we have that could be said to support resurrection over theft is scanty and not very reliable. And even that can all be explained by other natural phenomena, such as hallucination and legendary development.[37] Therefore, not only does resurrection have a much lower antecedent probability than theft, but it is only weakly supported by specific evidence in the case of Jesus. I cannot explore here all the issues relevant to determining whether theft is actually more probable than a resurrection. I can only leave it to the reader to decide, given all the evidence presented above, whether the body was more likely stolen or, more importantly, whether we can confidently assert that it *wasn't*.[38]

NOTES

1. The present chapter is a significant revision of "The Guarded Tomb of Jesus and Daniel in the Lion's Den: An Argument for the Plausibility of Theft," which appeared in the *Journal of Higher Criticism* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 304–18. Many thanks go to Jeffery Jay Lowder, Greg Cavin, and others for their helpful advice and criticism.

2. On the former, see the conclusion to my chapter "The Burial of Jesus in Light of Jewish Law." On the latter, see J. Duncan M. Derrett's chapter, "Financial Aspects of the Resurrection."

3. William Lane Craig, "The Empty Tomb of Jesus," in *In Defense of Miracles: A Comprehensive Case for God's Action in History*, ed. R. Douglas Geivett and Gary Habermas (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), p. 259. As an example of an argument for theft, Craig cites David Whittaker, "What Happened to the Body of Jesus? A Speculation," *Expository Times* 81 (1970): 307–10. Essentially the same arguments against theft appear in Craig's *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1989), pp. 376–78, where he also cites as a "theft proponent" J. A. T. Robinson, *Can We Trust the New Testament?* (Peru, IL: Open Court, 1977), p. 124. Finally, Craig argues that the tomb was likely guarded in "The Guard at the Tomb," *New Testament Studies* 30, no. 2 (Apr. 1984): 273–81.

4. F. de Zulueta, "Violation of Sepulture in Palestine at the Beginning of the Christian Era," *Journal of Roman Studies* 22 (1932): 184–97; F. Cumont, "Un Rescrit Impérial sur la Violation de Sépulture," *Revue Historique* (Jan.–Apr. 1930): 241–66. The Nazareth Inscription is not our only direct evidence that this problem existed: cf. Macer, *Public Prosecutions* 1 (from the *Digest of Justinian* [= D.] 47.12.8); Paul, *Views* 5 (D. 47.12.11); Gaius *Institutes* 2.2–10; and Ulpian *Duties of the Proconsul* 2 (D. 47.12.1), citing a decree of emperor Septimius Severus reasserting existing law (ibid., 25; D. 47.12.3.3 and 7), hence the law was being ignored: theft of bodies was clearly a live issue.

5. Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. 167, cf. also 212–17; Christopher Faraone and Dirk Obbink, *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 177, 225, 228, 229; Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 206–209. These are the standard reference works in the field, though a new text recently published should join them: Daniel Ogden, *Greek and Roman Necromancy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002). Also important for the study of necromancy is still L. Fahz, *De Poetarum Romanorum Doctrina Magica Quaestiones Selectae = Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten* 2.3 (1904). The theme of body parts used in magic also frequently appears in literature: from Apuleius (*Metamorphosis* 2.21–30) to Heliodorus (*Ethiopian Story of Theagenes and Charicleia* 6.14.2–6.15.5), and from Lucan (*Pharsalia* 6.430–34, 770–73, 509, 534–60; this also attests to the special importance for wizards of crucifixion nails and the blood of criminals) to Statius (*Thebaid* 4.500–43) and Horace (*Satirae* 1.8.21ff.). The earliest extant literary mention appears to be Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 4.51.

6. Tacitus *Annals* 2.69; cf. Luck, *Arcana Mundi*, p. 90.

7. Cf. *Papyri Graecae Magicae* 4.2140–44, 4.2076ff., etc.; cf. Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 76.

8. E.g., *Papyri Graecae Magicae* 4.2031–32, 4.2038–41, 4.2088.

9. Ibid., 4.1928–2005 (skull); 4.2574–2601, 4.2643ff. (heart).

10. See section 6.1 (esp. n269) of my chapter on "The Spiritual Body of Christ."

11. Whether there were guards will be addressed later—Craig does not use that argument here, no doubt because he realized it would contradict and thus refute his second objection above, even though he elsewhere argues that the guards were genuine, and even uses this to defend the resurrection in *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1984), p. 264. Note that the issue of time is moot, guards or not, if we follow Acts, which records that the resurrection claim was not made public until forty days (1:3) or in fact fifty days (2:1, w. 2:14ff.) after the burial, leaving ample time for the body to disappear.

12. John 20:6–7: *ta othonia* (also in Luke 24:12, a disputed passage, regarded by some as an interpolation from John) means literally "little linen cloths," i.e., wrappings, patches, or bandages, not clothes; and *to soudarion* means "little towel," i.e., napkin, handkerchief, or face cloth. One wonders what Craig is thinking anyway. That Jesus undressed before walking out of the tomb?

13. Suggested by Gary Habermas and J. P. Moreland in *Beyond Death: Exploring the Evidence for Immortality* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1998), p. 116.

14. E.g., Erich von Däniken, *Chariots of the Gods? Unsolved Mysteries of the Past* (New York: Bantam, 1968).

15. Cf. "Arguments to the best explanation," C. Behan McCullagh, *Justifying Historical Descriptions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 15ff., whose method Craig not only endorses but employs, cf. William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, p. 183, etc.

16. Especially with other influencing factors that appear to have been present, as I point out in the conclusion to my chapter "The Burial of Jesus in Light of Jewish Law."

17. Numerous scholars have argued this, and not just radical skeptics like Earl Doherty, *The Jesus Puzzle* (Ottawa: Canadian Humanist Publications, 2000), and G. A. Wells, *The Jesus Myth* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1999). For example: Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990); Alvar Ellegård, *Jesus: One Hundred Years Before Christ* (London: Century, 1999); Thomas Sheehan, *The First Coming: How the Kingdom of God Became Christianity* (New York: Random House, 1986); Robert M. Price, *Deconstructing Jesus* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000); Gerd Lüdemann, *What Really Happened to Jesus: A Historical Approach to the Resurrection*, trans. John Bowden (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1995); etc.

18. I deal with that in my chapter on "The Spiritual Body of Christ."

19. Craig, *Assessing the New Testament*, p. 377.

20. "Sensing Trouble in the Skies," *Newsweek*, April 7, 1997, p. 43; indeed, the cult still exists: "Is There Life after Death for Heaven's Gate?" *U.S. News & World Report*, March 30, 1998, p. 32.

21. Several survivors have defended their position: e.g., Mark Lane, *The Strongest Poison*

(New York: E. P. Dutton, 1980); Michael Meiers, *Was Jonestown a CIA Medical Experiment? A Review of the Evidence* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1988); Rebecca Moore and Fielding McGehee, *The Need for a Second Look at Jonestown* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1989).

22. Cf. Atiba Jahson Alemu I, *The Rastafari Ible* (Chicago: Research Associates, 1996); Barry Chevannes, *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994); Jah Bones, *One Love: Rastafari History, Doctrine, and Livity* (New York: Vantage, 1992).

23. Cf. Robert E. van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), pp. 84–104, with K. A. Olson, "Eusebius and the *Testimonium Flavianum*," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61 (1999): 305–22.

24. Craig, "The Guard at the Tomb," *New Testament Studies* 30, no. 2 (Apr. 1984): 276.

25. Ibid., p. 274.

26. Craig does concede this in ibid., pp. 273–74, 276 (citing Paul Rohrbach, *Die Berichte über die Auferstehung Jesu Christi*, 1898, p. 79).

27. Ibid., p. 278.

28. Thomas Mathews, *The Clash of the Gods: A Reinterpretation of Christian Art*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 66, 72, 77–84 (w. figs. 55, 59); Robin Margaret Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 174–78 (w. figs. 21, 24). Pagan influences have also been adduced, but this does not rule out a syncretism of pagan and Danielic motifs, especially if we recognize the "mythic currency" such motifs would have as commonly understood symbols pointing to deeper meaning (as argued by Evan Fales, "Taming the Tehom," in the present volume). On such pagan influences, see my chapter "The Spiritual Body of Christ," and Dennis MacDonald, "Rescued Corpses" and "Tombs at Dawn," in *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 154–61 and 162–69.

29. The Danielic idea of the righteous decree spread by the authorities *to all nations* is neatly contrasted with the lie bought with money and then spread, again by the authorities, *among the Jews* (Matt. 28:15), thus perfecting the contrast between the wicked regime of the Jews and their slavery to sin, and the "good news" reserved for all mankind (Matt. 28:19), an accusation that also provides an apologetic for why many Jews did not convert (Matt. 28:17).

30. Ibid.

31. Cf. Matt. 6:2, 5,16; 7:5; 15:7; 22:18; 23:13, 15, 23, 25; 27–29; 24:51.

32. MacDonald, *Homeric Epics*, pp. 8–9.

33. Jaan Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

34. Craig, "The Guard at the Tomb," pp. 274, 279n5.

35. On which point see also Michael Martin's two chapters in the present volume.

36. See my discussion of this methodological point in the introduction to my chapter, "The Burial of Jesus in Light of Jewish Law." On the issue of evidence for naturalism against supernaturalism, see, for example, Taner Edis, *The Ghost in the Universe: God in Light of Modern Science* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002), and my forthcoming book *Sense and Goodness without God: A Defense of Metaphysical Naturalism*.

37. See my chapter "The Spiritual Body of Christ and the Legend of the Empty Tomb."

38. The specific challenge is this: for resurrection to be believed, one must not only show that its final epistemic probability is greater than for theft (as also for each and every other alternative), which I doubt can be done, but one must *also* show that the sum of all final epistemic probabilities—of theft and all other explanations that exclude a resurrection—is less than 50 percent. For otherwise, even if resurrection were the most probable of all explanations available, it would *still* be more probable that something *else* happened. In other words, given R is resurrection, if the probability of ~R is greater than the probability of R, we cannot claim to know that R is true. As often happens when we know too little to be certain, even if we thought R was the most likely explanation of the facts, we would not know enough to be sure it was the right explanation.

10

THE BURIAL OF JESUS IN LIGHT OF JEWISH LAW

RICHARD C. CARRIER

Was Christianity begun by a mistake? It is a distinct possibility. The surviving evidence, legal and historical, suggests the body of Jesus was not formally buried Friday night when it was placed in a tomb by Joseph of Arimathea, that instead it had to have been placed Saturday night in a special public graveyard reserved for convicts. On this theory the women who visited the tomb Sunday morning mistook its vacancy. That, in conjunction with other factors (like reinterpretations of scripture and things Jesus said, the dreams and visions of leading disciples, and the desire to seize an opportunity to advance the moral cause of Jesus), led to a belief that Jesus had risen from the grave (probably, originally, by direct ascension to heaven, as I argued in a previous chapter). And so Christianity began.

The details of this theory are not new. Raymond Brown agrees that "in his anxiety to have Jesus buried before sunset," Joseph could have been "willing to have his own tomb serve as a temporary receptacle for the body of the crucified until the Sabbath was over," if we accept the combined testimony of all the Gospels, and not only that of Mark.[1] Likewise, after an extensive survey of the evidence and arguments Byron McCane concludes that "Jesus was indeed buried in disgrace in a criminals' tomb" although "from an early date the Christian tradition tried to conceal this unpleasant fact."[2]

However, Brown concludes we can't really know what happened to the body (any theory "would be little more than a guess") and McCane, rejecting all accounts except Mark's (and thus rejecting the claim that Joseph used his own or a new tomb), believes Jesus was placed in the criminals' graveyard from the start.

However, there are many interpretations of the evidence, various theories regarding the origins of Christianity, ranging from complete truth (Jesus really did rise from the grave exactly as the Gospels say) to complete myth (the Gospel stories are entirely fictional), and everything in between. It is probably impossible to determine which explanation is correct, since the evidence we would need to decide the matter is gone. But so long as there are plausible natural explanations available, the resurrection story cannot be used as evidence of a supernatural event. For an inference to naturalism remains reasonable: since every event we have been able to thoroughly study has turned out to have a natural and not a supernatural explanation, any event we cannot thoroughly study (due to uncertain and inaccessible evidence, like the present case) can reasonably be predicted to have a natural explanation, too. Supernaturalism has no comparable inference available, since we have not even a single example of a confirmed supernatural explanation. Thus, the existence of plausible natural explanations for the resurrection story means supernatural explanations cannot be confidently defended. For we just don't have the kind of evidence it would take to confirm them.

In other chapters I have presented two plausible natural explanations: first, and in my opinion the most probable, that the story is an outright legend (though with a genuine "spiritual" core); and second, that the body was stolen, giving rise to belief that Jesus rose from the grave. Here I present a third: that the body of Jesus was *legally* moved, leading to a mistaken belief in his resurrection. This explanation is neither improbable nor implausible, and has even greater merit than the possibility of theft, since the present theory entails Jesus *had* to have been moved. Therefore, this possibility cannot be ruled out, unless the evidence for some other explanation is shown to be substantially stronger.

Since various objections to this possibility have already been addressed in another chapter by Jeffery Jay Lowder, I will mainly restrict the present argument to the positive case.[3]

THE ROLE OF JEWISH LAW

It is probable that Jewish law was applicable to the burial of Jesus even under Roman government. And when we examine the relevant laws, we find that many details of the Gospel accounts acquire special meaning. First, Joseph of Arimathea's action in seeking the body of Christ Friday evening was probably a standard procedure, required by Jewish law. Second, Joseph's use of his own or an available tomb to hold Jesus temporarily during the Sabbath was also probably provided for by the law. And third, the law probably required Joseph to bury Jesus Saturday night in a special public graveyard reserved for blasphemers and other criminals of comparable ignominy.

We cannot know what really happened, since we cannot be sure of the reliability of the Gospels and we have no other sources to work from, nor can we entirely trust our legal evidence. But we can say what must have happened according to the laws of the time if (1) the Gospel accounts as we have them contain a basically true story, however exaggerated or embellished in the details, and (2) certain Judaic laws did in fact apply. Since the second hypothesis is no less probable than the first, anyone who accepts the one should reasonably accept the other. And when we do, we will see the evidence implies a certain fate for Jesus' body that the New Testament authors show no awareness of.

THE SOURCES

The most obvious objection to any theory based on Jewish Law is that all our sources for that law come very late and span many centuries. So some explanation of the source situation is necessary. The details of Jewish Law are preserved in several sources, six of which are important here: the Mishnah, the Tosefta, the tractate *Semahot*, the Midrash Rabbah, and the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds.[4]

The Mishnah is the most important. This was a record made c. 200 CE of traditional oral law passed down by the Pharisees since the Second Temple Period, which ended with the first Jewish War in 66–70 CE. Though it contains additions afterward, these are usually given as added opinions rather than redactional changes, and the content is clearly conservative in pre-

serving very early law. For example, though the temple was destroyed forever in 70 CE, and Jews for almost two centuries were banned from entering Jerusalem after 135 CE, the Mishnah law retains very detailed rules for temple worship and refers constantly to affairs and circumstances unique to Jerusalem. Even when groups like the Sadducees no longer existed, they are frequently featured in the preserved oral sayings, confirming a first-century origin and context. That alone is not decisive, but where we find agreement with *other* legal texts *and* first-century sources, we are on reasonably safe ground: such laws probably applied to the burial of Jesus.

After the Mishnah, the Tosefta (meaning "supplement") was compiled by other rabbis over the following century as an adjunct to the Mishnah. Then came the tractate *Semahot*, a compilation of Jewish laws pertaining to funeral rites and care of the dead, collected, probably by a community in Babylon, in the later third century CE.[5] Last came the Midrash Rabbah, a collection of commentaries on the Torah (Old Testament) compiled in the sixth century. In between came the two Talmuds. These are scholarly commentaries on the Mishnah, made in two different communities politically and culturally divided: one under the Roman Empire, in the again-free Jerusalem of the fourth century (though the compiling began in outlying Galilean cities a century earlier); the other in Babylon, inside the new Persian Empire, completed c. 500 CE. The textual tradition of the latter is far superior, and it is complete, while the extant Palestinian Talmud has large gaps. Overall, the Babylonian Talmud has always held greater authority, so all quotes from the Talmud here shall come from this, unless otherwise noted.

Though developed independently, and deviating on some points, containing different stories, and so forth, the two Talmuds corroborate each other in numerous details, demonstrating the impressive conservatism of the Jewish schools. This is not surprising given how serious the Jews were about their oral law: it was supposed to have been passed on since Moses and was regarded as equal in authority to the Torah, so changes in the law itself were little tolerated. The Mishnaic law was likely left largely unchanged, while the Talmudic commentary was used to interpret the law as needed. But even then the main principle was consistency with Mishnah and Torah, and so the Talmud was likewise remarkably conservative. Consequently, except where specific reasons can be adduced for thinking otherwise in any given case, the contents of these texts more likely than not applied in the time of Jesus.

This is largely confirmed by first-century sources: the principles and even many of the laws themselves are corroborated by Jewish observers like the historian Josephus (37–c. 100 CE) and the philosopher Philo (c. 15 BCE–c. 50 CE), especially in the latter's *De Specialibus Legibus*. What deviations we find are usually minor points of interpretation,[6] or concern details not relevant to our present investigation. For example, although we are told burial customs pertaining to mourning and treatment of the body were simplified after the Jewish War (Talmud, Qatan 27b), these have nothing to do with where and when the body could be buried, which are the only issues that will concern us. Nor would simplification of those laws affect the present thesis, for even if the laws we will discuss are *simpler* than they were in the first century, they would still have applied.

Finally, in addition to such general arguments for the applicability of these sources to first-century questions, we have further reasons to rely on them here. Since the specific laws we will examine were based on the Torah, or were necessary for reconciling conflicting Torah laws, it is highly improbable that they arose after the Second Temple period, since such conflicts would have been as much in need of resolution then as later. And although our sources do come late and span many centuries, it is improbable that they would all agree on these details (as we shall see they do) unless they are indeed preserving laws from such an early period. Last but not least, we will see corroboration on many points in sources contemporary with Jesus, leaving even less doubt of their applicability (and, incidentally, of their accurate preservation across many texts over many centuries). For all these reasons, there can be no *presumption* that the laws we will discuss did not obtain in Jesus' day, nor is there any specific reason to think so.

JEWISH LAW UNDER ROMAN RULE

The next objection might be that Jewish law would not apply to Jesus during the Roman occupation. However, it is generally agreed that before the Jewish War the Jews had the practice of their own laws to a quite remarkable degree. Important exceptions related to political appointments and the control of money and property, obvious areas of Roman interest (the issue of the death penalty will be discussed later). But otherwise Jewish law was

upheld. This was a tradition of respect passed down since Julius Caesar decreed it.[7] After the Jewish War, this was no longer the case. But in the time of Jesus, Romans who ran roughshod over Jewish law, like Pontius Pilate, seem to have been acting extralegally, against the decrees of emperors Caesar, Augustus, and Tiberius.

It was this sporadic abuse that ultimately led the Jews to war, believing it was "righteous" to die for the law. Pilate learned this the hard way his first day on the job. According to Josephus, when Pilate marched legions into Jerusalem itself, bearing their standards, he first snuck them in by night, but when day broke hundreds of Jews protested urgently against the abuse of their law against icons. When he threatened them with violence, they all offered their necks and said they would rather die than see the law transgressed. Overawed by this fanaticism, Pilate removed the legionary standards.[8]

Sporadic abuses aside, Roman allowance for Jewish law was normally rather extensive. We are told that even in wartime, Titus respected the laws of the Sabbath and suspended his siege of Jerusalem for a day, and though obviously victorious he was willing to return all their laws to them in exchange for peace.[9] Though that may be postwar propaganda, even before the war Romans used their own manpower to enforce the Jews' laws.[10] Josephus repeats at several points that before the War the Romans made sure the Jewish laws were observed, quoting Titus himself: "We have preserved the laws of your forefathers to you, and have withal permitted you to live, either by yourselves, or among others, as it should please you," an argument that would not work if it wasn't true.[11] The only persistent violations of Jewish law by Roman authorities recorded in Josephus (at least before the time of Caligula) are lootings of the temple fund and similar financial actions, which is not surprising since the Romans didn't care so much how people governed themselves as long as Caesar got his cash.

This is proven in Philo's account of his own failed embassy to Caligula, where he describes how things once were under Augustus, who "maintained firmly the native customs of each particular nation no less than of the Romans" and to such an extent in the case of the Jews that "everyone everywhere, even if he was not naturally well disposed to the Jews, was afraid to engage in destroying any of our institutions, and indeed it was the same under Tiberius," who, even when he punished Jewish conspirators, "charged his prefects in every place to which they were appointed . . . to disturb none

of the established customs but even to regard them as a trust committed to their care."[12] And Josephus even preserves, verbatim, numerous imperial decrees declaring that the Jews shall have their laws. Prominent is a law passed by Augustus Caesar, stating that "the Jews are to follow their own customs in accordance with their ancestral law, just as they did in the time of Hyrcanus, High Priest of the God Most High."[13]

It is clear Jewish law was to a large extent active and applicable in the time of Jesus. Certainly, we cannot rule out the applicability of any of the laws we will discuss. Moreover, the evidence certainly establishes the special and peculiar place Jews had in the Roman empire, especially within Jerusalem and under Tiberius, when Jesus was executed. How the Romans, for example, dealt with the bodies of the crucified elsewhere, or in other times, is of no use in ascertaining what was usual under Pilate in Jerusalem.

DOWN BY SUNSET

Torah Law is clear on the burial of executed men:

> If a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day, for he who is hanged is the curse of God, so that you do not defile your land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance.[14]

The word given here as "tree" is *es* in Hebrew, which means either tree or any plank of wood. In fact, the root of this word is the verb "to shut" which implies planks used for doors or windows rather than living trees, and this is how the Jews understood it. The Talmud says *es* can mean either a plank or a tree (*Sanhedrin* 46b), and the detailed description of this act in the Mishnah involves planks rather than a tree (*Sanhedrin* 6.4n–q).[15] The Septuagint even renders *es* here as *xylon* in Greek,[16] which comes from the verb "to make smooth, to polish" and very specifically refers to worked wood and not a living tree. It very commonly designated the poles or planks used for tying or nailing up the condemned. So *es* and *xylon* in this context could just as well be translated "cross."[17]

This law is confirmed and elaborated in the Mishnah tractate *Sanhedrin*: people could be executed either by stoning, burning, decapitation, or stran-

gulation (7.1a–c), but whichever it was, when the crime was blasphemy (6.4h–i) the corpse was then hung on a pole for display, apparently like a slab of meat, resembling a crucifixion (6.4n–p). And whether executed or not, a body had to be taken down by sunset (6.4q–r), for "whoever allows his deceased to stay unburied overnight transgresses a negative commandment" (6.5c), unless one needs that time "to honor the corpse," such as to get the necessary shroud and bier (6.5d; 47a). So there is no doubt that taking the bodies of the condemned down by sunset was a fundamental commandment that was sacrilege to disobey. Though official burial could be legally postponed, for holy days or to complete necessary preparations (as we shall see), a body could not remain hanging into the night.

Josephus confirms the seriousness with which this commandment was followed. When he describes the Jewish "constitution" handed down by Moses, he includes these laws:

> Let him who blasphemes God be stoned to death and hung during the day, and let him be buried dishonorably and out of sight . . . [and] . . . when he has continued there for one whole day, that all the people may see him, let him be buried in the night. And thus it is that we bury all whom the laws condemn to die, upon any account whatsoever. Let our enemies that fall in battle be also buried; nor let any one dead body lie above the ground, or suffer a punishment beyond what justice requires.[18]

He is even more explicit when he criticizes the sins of the Zealots in wartime:

> They proceeded to that degree of impiety as to cast away their dead bodies without burial, although the Jews used to take so much care of the burial of men, that they took down those that were condemned and crucified, and buried them before the sun went down.[19]

In fact, Josephus goes on to blame this violation of the law as a contributing cause of Judaea's demise and portrays this crime as even more heinous than murdering priests. It follows that it must have been a wicked crime that was not often committed before the war. So the Romans must have allowed this law to be observed in the time of Jesus, at least in Jerusalem (otherwise Josephus could not blame the Zealots here).

It is fairly certain that Jesus was believed from very early on to have been

executed in accordance with this law. In fact, our earliest source, Paul, explicitly says so, quoting the very Torah law above: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. For it is written, 'cursed is everyone who hangs on a post'" (Galatians 3:13).[20] And in accord with the Torah law condemning blasphemers to death (Leviticus 24:16), three of the four evangelists state unequivocally that Jesus was condemned to death for blasphemy by the Jewish high council (Mark 14:64, Matthew 26:65–66, John 19:7). Mark (10:33) and Matthew (20:18) even have Jesus *predict* he will be condemned to death by the Jewish council. Of course, Luke's rhetoric held that Jesus was condemned without cause (Acts 13:27–28), but he nevertheless has the Jews render a death sentence (Luke 24:20, Acts 4:10). In Acts 5:30, Peter accuses the Jews of putting Jesus to death by hanging him on a *xylon*, paraphrasing the Septuagint law, and Luke says outright that Jesus had to be "classed with criminals" in order to fulfill prophecy.[21]

Therefore, although Jesus is ultimately executed by the Romans in the Gospel stories (seemingly on some charge like sedition, or possibly for no reason beyond Pilate's amusement), he was clearly believed from the earliest time to have been condemned to death for blasphemy by the Jewish high council. Paul even connected Jesus' death with this law—as did, apparently, Peter (according to the author of Acts). Given this, and what we know the Jewish law on blasphemy was, and the fact that the Jews enjoyed the practice of their laws at the time, especially ones taken so seriously as this, and the fact that Josephus writes as if the law was both observed under the Roman peace and regarded as especially vile to break, it seems fairly certain that if the stories about his death are at all correct, Jesus had to have been taken down before sunset and buried as soon as possible. This might also make *theological* sense: for according to the Talmud only through legal execution could an offender obtain forgiveness for his sins (*Sanhedrin* 47a).[22]

The sunset law is confirmed, though possibly qualified, by the Jewish philosopher Philo. Though he writes about conditions in Egyptian Alexandria, under Caligula and the prefect Flaccus, where circumstances were significantly different than in Jerusalem under Tiberius and Pilate, his remarks support Josephus a fortiori. In his attack on the prefect Flaccus, Philo throughout presents the antisemitic actions of this Alexandrian prefect as illegal, or extralegal, first concealed from Tiberius, and then supported by the tyrannical Caligula. In particular, when Flaccus committed a gross violation

of Roman custom, and crucified innocent men on a holiday, he even went so far as to deny them burial. In describing this crime, Philo observes:

> I know that some of those crucified in the past were taken down when a day-of-rest of such a kind was about to start, and they were returned to their families for the purpose of enjoying burial and the customary rites. For there is need even that the dead enjoy some good upon the birthday of an emperor and, at the same time, that the sacred character of the public holy day be protected.[23]

Even if we take this passage to mean that burial before sunset was not regularly honored for Alexandrian Jews except at the onset of holy days, this violation of the law was not likely practiced in Jerusalem, given the special status of the city as Jewish holy ground. And even if it was violated in such a way in Jerusalem, Jesus was crucified at the onset of a major public holy day (the Passover) and thus the exception normally observed in Alexandria must have been observed in his case, too.

But Philo is not necessarily saying this. For it was usual for crucified victims to survive many days, and the Jewish law of burial would only apply when they actually died. Philo is speaking not of the dead merely, but of the crucified, so his story does not entail that Jewish burial law was normally violated in Alexandria. Instead, this account provides support for John's claim that death was hastened at the onset of a holy day in order to permit rapid burial, a fact confirmed by the recovered bones of the crucified Jehohanan, whose legs were broken shortly before death.[24]

In other words, Philo is saying that the bodies of the condemned normally had to be taken down and turned over for burial in order to "protect the sacred character of a public holy day." Though the occasion he is reflecting on is the birthday of an emperor, his comment entails that all holy days "of such a kind" saw this clemency. This is the case both grammatically and logically. The structure of the sentence is: it is necessary that *A* and, at the same time, *B*. Thus *B* (surrender of bodies to protect the day's holiness) is necessary *independently* of the fact of *A* (surrender of bodies to honor the emperor's clemency). Philo's argument is that the emperor's birthday was a day so holy that it deserved to be treated like *other* holy days, and since holy days generally required the taking down of the crucified, the crucified ought to be taken down on the emperor's birthday.

Thus, though the Gospel of Mark makes it appear as though Joseph of Arimathea was winning some special privilege for Jesus,[25] there is no reason to suppose he was doing anything out of the ordinary for a Jew in Jerusalem. Approaching the Roman prefect and asking for the bodies of the condemned before sunset may have been a routine courtesy, especially since Pilate would not expect Jesus to have died so soon.[26] We can plausibly reason that if Pilate forced a corpse to remain up against one of the most sacred of Jewish laws, and during Passover no less, this could not have failed to result in the sort of suicidal demonstration that followed his placing of the standards within the city walls. At the very least, Jewish outrage at this crime—and it would be a crime even to the Romans, violating the Augustan law cited above—could hardly have escaped record. And as Pilate acquiesced in the case of the standards, he would just as likely acquiesce in the treatment of a condemned corpse, since he would hardly want to irk the fanatical Jews on a daily basis by allowing the law to be continually and arrogantly violated in front of them.

It should also not be regarded as unusual that *Joseph* seeks the body of Jesus. The Gospels suggest that no family relations of Jesus are in the city at the time of the crucifixion,[27] leaving it to local elders to ensure the commandments of God were not violated. So serious was this holy duty that:

> The Talmud (BK 81a) states that speedy burial of a corpse found unattended [*met mitzvah*] was one of the ten enactments ordained by Joshua at the conquest of Canaan and is encumbent even on the high priest who was otherwise forbidden to become unclean through contact with the dead (Nazir 7.1). Josephus records that it is forbidden to let a corpse lie unburied (*Contra Apion*, 2.211)[28]

It was thus the holy duty of the Jews to see to the body of Jesus, and it was sacred law that he be buried the day he died. The tractate *Semahot* confirms this, stating that "No rites whatsoever should be denied those who were executed by the state" (2.9), meaning a heathen government (Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 47b). Though *Semahot* also goes on to discuss what to do if the state refuses, this most likely referred to problems created by postwar and non-Roman governments, or circumstances outside Jerusalem. The decree of Augustus, which was still in effect when and where Jesus was executed, probably ensured that the state could not *legally* refuse.

GRAVEYARDS OF THE CONDEMNED

While there can be little doubt the law required that Jesus be taken down before Friday night, it also appears to have required that he be buried in a special public graveyard. The Mishnah tractate *Sanhedrin* (6.5e–f) goes on to explain the law regarding the burial of condemned men: "They did not bury the condemned in the burial grounds of his ancestors, but there were two graveyards made ready for the use of the court, one for those who were beheaded or strangled, and one for those who were stoned or burned."

This is probably what is confirmed by the first-century text of Josephus, who says the condemned must be buried "dishonorably" (*JW* 4.202, also: *AJ* 5.44). For no sources list any other dishonor for the body beyond place of burial (besides restrictions on mourning). There is also no reason why this would be a novel development, and there is no evidence it was. And it is doubtful that early Jews would have accepted any more than later Jews the indignity of having criminals buried next to them (see below). Beyond all this, the use of special graveyards for the condemned is widely confirmed, in four other sources: both Talmuds, the Tosefta, and the Midrash Rabbah, which refer to it as a "tradition" or discuss it in the context of what the Jerusalem community did, confirming the practice as a very old one.[29] Therefore, it probably applied in the time of Jesus.

The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 47a) repeats the Mishnah, and adds a discussion that includes the following commentary: "and just as a wicked person is not buried beside a righteous one, so is a grossly wicked person not to be buried beside one moderately wicked. Then should there not have been four graveyards? [No, for] it is a tradition that there should be but two," i.e., the two graveyards reserved for criminals. The reason there were two is that those guilty of graver offenses should not be buried in the same place as other criminals, and certainly not next to the innocent. The question put here is that since each of the four modes of execution varies in severity, shouldn't there be four criminal graveyards? The answer is no, by appeal to tradition.

The Tosefta likewise repeats the Mishnah and then comments, emphasizing the biblical basis for this law. First, as God himself says (Deut. 21:23), anyone who is hanged is cursed before God (*Sanhedrin* 9.7), and thus had to be treated as such (as Paul clearly believed of Jesus). And there were no exceptions, for "even if he were a king of kings, they would not bury him in

the burial grounds of his ancestors, but in the burial grounds of the court" (*Sanhedrin* 9.8d), meaning the two burial grounds "made ready for the use of the court" as the Mishnah states. The Tosefta also claims that King David confirmed the law because he said "Do not gather my soul with the sinners" (*Sanhedrin* 9.9a–b, cf. Ps. 26:9). The Palestinian Talmud also repeats the law and cites a similar biblical authority: the Mishnah law is "in line with that which David says, 'sweep me not away with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty men.' 'With sinners' refers to those stoned and burned to death. 'With bloodthirsty men' refers to those who are beheaded and strangled."[30] Finally, the Midrash Rabbah says: "Those slain by a court of law are not buried in their fathers' sepulchres, but in a grave by themselves" (Num. 23:13 [877]).

Jesus, as a blasphemer, would be earmarked for stoning and thus for the Graveyard of the Stoned and Burned.[31] The Mishnah itself goes on to explain that only "when the flesh was completely decomposed were the bones gathered and buried in their proper place," i.e., only then could the family rebury the condemned man in their ancestral tomb.[32] There were no apparent exceptions made for a just execution by a Gentile government,[33] particularly when the Sanhedrin had already condemned the man, since that meant his death was "merited" in the eyes of Jewish law. Indeed, Talmudic interpretation held that the mere fact of a disgraceful death, and the stain of wickedness it entailed, required burial in a special graveyard, since the corpse could only be placed next to others of like indignity. As noted above, this was the very purpose of having two graveyards reserved for different kinds of criminals. And there is no particular reason to believe this law or the reasoning behind it arose after the time of Jesus. Thus it seems Jesus had to have been buried in a special graveyard reserved for common criminals.

This is not affected by the fact that we cannot confirm or refute the claim that the Jews were "not permitted to put anyone to death."[34] If true, this would mean that Pilate, having the *imperium* assigned to him as a prefect of the governor of Syria, would have to be consulted before an execution took place, which does appear to be what happens in the Gospels. Though there is no direct evidence for this, it is plausible: Judaea being a Roman province, capital punishment would fall under Roman law, which held that only a magistrate legally holding the *fasces* had power over life and death. This would not violate the decree of Augustus, since the Sanhedrin could still try people under their law, especially for religious offenses.[35] They merely had to

seek approval from Pilate before carrying out the execution. But we have no examples of any such limitation affecting the Sanhedrin and thus cannot say how it was dealt with, or if it was applied. The Tosefta confirms that a symbolic touching of a stone to a condemned man's heart would satisfy "the religious requirement of stoning" (*Sanhedrin*, 9.6h), drawing on the Mishnah's allowance for such a practice (*Sanhedrin* 6.4e). The Tosefta also says one had to do what one could: if you couldn't carry out the proper execution prescribed by law, you were allowed to use another method, even one more severe, since the exact means was less important than the execution itself, a rule the Tosefta justifies by stating, "as it is said, 'And you will exterminate the evil from your midst.'"[36] Thus, no matter what, Jesus would still have been reckoned with the criminals and buried separately from the righteous. We have no reason to believe otherwise.

TEMPORARY UNBURIAL

If our sources are correct and their evidence does apply to the time and place in question, and we have no particular reason to believe otherwise in this case, then by law Jesus could not have been buried in a private tomb. Yet most accounts say he was.[37] So we are left to ask: Why wasn't Jesus taken to the criminals' graveyard as the law required? One answer is: Maybe he was. The law and the circumstances may have conspired to require formal burial by Joseph on Saturday night, a detail the Gospels omit. And if this is correct, then no one in the Christian Gospel tradition seems to have known what really happened.

The law requiring prompt burial could be fulfilled temporarily by placing a corpse in storage (e.g., in the "shade") until a proper burial could be carried out. One such case was the arrival of the Sabbath, on which it was forbidden to perform any labor, including burial rites, or even so much as moving a body (in most cases).[38] It was also forbidden to bury on the first day of a festival,[39] and Jesus appears to have died on the first day of Passover.[40] If that is correct, then even if Joseph buried Jesus *before* sundown he broke the law, at least the law as preserved in extant sources. Either way, he broke the law if he buried Jesus *after* sundown, because it was then the Sabbath. Joseph was probably no sinner, so we can conclude he might not have buried Jesus

at all. It is quite possible that he merely took the body down and tucked it away as the law required, to await burial at the earliest opportunity, which would have been Saturday night. Further delay would have been illegal.

It seems evident that Joseph had to move fast. Though Jesus is said to have died around three in the afternoon,[41] clearly some time passed before his body was finally taken down. For all the Synoptics stress the urgency of sundown: in the earliest account, before even asking for the body, "evening had already come" (Mark 15:42), and there was yet further delay awaiting the centurion to confirm the death of Jesus (Mark 15:44), and then all the walking involved (both to and from Pilate, then from the cross to the grave).

Although Mark says "when evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath," if the sun had gone down it would *be* the Sabbath and thus could not be the preparation day. Since Mark specifically says it was still the day *before* the Sabbath, the word for "evening" (*opsia*, "late" sc. 'hour') must refer to the hour or minutes just before sunset. Matthew likewise qualifies the time in this way: the *opsia* in 27:57 must be understood in the context of 27:62 when the time only *then* shifts to "the next day, which is the one after the preparation." Luke 23:54 confirms this reading: Joseph had placed Jesus in a tomb on "the preparation day, when the Sabbath was *about* to begin."

Therefore, it seems likely that Joseph had no time to accomplish a burial, which required procuring a shroud and bier, as well as ceremonial washing and anointing of the body. And besides, if it *was* the first day of Passover he could not have completed a burial anyway *even if he had the time*. And in accord with this, two of our accounts, including the earliest, imply the burial rites were not in fact completed.[42] So it is probable that Jesus was not really buried Friday night, just put away.

The legal case for this is corroborated in the Midrash Rabbah, where David is said to wish that he would die on the eve of the Sabbath so his body would experience a final Sabbath before its burial on Sunday (Eccles. 12:148). So it was expected that those dying just before sundown had to await a later burial. And "temporary tombs" for such occasions, where a body was "put" rather than buried, are attested in the *Semahot*: "Whosoever finds a corpse in a tomb should not move it from its place, unless he knows that this is a temporary grave." Hence the story that "Rabban Gamaliel had a temporary tomb [lit. "a borrowed tomb"] in Yabneh into which they bring the corpse and

lock the door upon it," just as Joseph did with Jesus. "Later," after mourning, "they would carry the body up to Jerusalem."[43] These passages speak of placing a body, not gathering bones, so they are probably not referring to secondary burial. But even if we read them in that way and not as referring to storage, we still know it was legal to move unburied bodies into shaded areas to protect them from the sun during the Sabbath.[44] Joseph's use of a nearby unused tomb for this function could well have confused onlookers (like the women) into mistaking this for an actual burial.

Temporary arrangements are also attested in the Talmud. One could "keep" a body "overnight" without transgressing the burial law (*Sanhedrin* 47a; quoting the Mishnah itself: *Sanhedrin* 6.5d). As one rabbi puts it: "people do not plant [vines] with the object of pulling them out, [but a burial] may sometimes take place at twilight and it is put down temporarily," which place does not count as "a grave" (Talmud *Baba Bathra* 102b), which cannot mean primary burial, since such burials *did* count as graves, nor would the reference to *twilight* make sense in such a context. The contrast here is clearly with vines being pulled back out, hence people often intended to take the body back out of a temporary place after the Sabbath passed (the only possible reason to emphasize "twilight" as an obstacle), in order to complete the burial rites (which are not to be confused with funeral rites: the laws regarding mourning are different from those regarding the care and fate of the body).

As there was a commandment to bury the body the night of death, except apparently when something like a Sabbath or festival intervened, Joseph would have been required to place Jesus in a shaded place, like an unused tomb, then officially bury him later. And since the law did not allow for any additional delays, Jesus had to be buried Saturday night. So, if all this is correct, then the body of Jesus could not have been in Joseph's tomb Sunday morning when all four Gospels claim the women visited it. Though they find it empty, by then, and by law, the body of Jesus would have to have been in the graveyard of the stoned and burned.

After all, we can presume Joseph's tomb would not have been in the criminals' graveyard, for that was public, not family property (as cited above, the criminal graveyards were "of the court"). And the special location was required to protect the righteous dead from the wicked, and to let the wicked atone before being moved back to rest with their kin. It is unlikely Joseph

would build a tomb for himself to rest among the wicked. And it is unlikely that anyone with dead kin buried near his tomb would appreciate the offense of mingling the wicked with the righteous, which makes the possibility that Joseph flouted the law unlikely. Therefore: Jesus had to be moved.

For these reasons it is also improbable that Joseph ignored the law and treated Jesus as a righteous man. Not only would doing so negate Paul's reasoning that Christ had to become a curse, but had Joseph done this, there would have been hell to pay, which would not have escaped record. There is also no motive for Joseph to weather such a storm, beyond what is obviously a legendary embellishment of the plain story in Mark. From merely a god-fearing man who doesn't even finish the burial (Mark 15:43, 16:1), Joseph becomes someone said to have actually abstained from condemning Jesus (but who still didn't finish the burial: Luke 23:50–51, 24:1), then he's a "disciple" of Jesus who gives a simple burial (Matt. 27:57–59), and finally, the transformation complete, he becomes a "secret disciple" who gives Jesus a king's burial defying all credulity (John 19:38–40). Surely Mark's account is closest to the truth here: Joseph was just a dutiful Jew and little more. This best explains why Mark and Luke agree that Joseph didn't finish the burial rites and *therefore* did not formally bury Jesus on Friday.

CONCLUSION

We are now left with a plausible natural explanation for reports of an "empty tomb," which may have sparked the entire Christian faith. It could all have started with an honest mistake. Of course, all this requires assuming that all our sources, including the Gospels and Judaica, can be trusted on the relevant points, which we cannot know for certain, though this is as likely as not, and at the very least is definitely plausible. And we must assume there are no mitigating details that *failed* to get mentioned in any of those sources—which is well enough, since to allow the introduction of such things would permit *any* theory to succeed or fail however we wished.

One crucial point is that if all the Gospels are wrong *except* Mark, it is possible Jesus *was* placed in the criminal's graveyard right from the start.[45] For Mark does not say the tomb was empty, new, or Joseph's (15:46), and only the place where the body was put is said to have been empty on Sunday

(16:5–6), not the entire tomb. Thus, Mark's account is consistent with, though necessarily entailing, the conclusion that the tomb was originally in the criminal's graveyard. Joseph might still have temporarily used his or an available tomb for any unexpected reason, indeed the more unexpected the more likely the subsequent mistake by those who came to believe Jesus was raised. But though plausible, this can only be a hypothesis. So the present theory *can* explain all the evidence but it isn't thereby proved, except insofar as it would explain why the tomb was empty and thus how the resurrection belief got started. Either way, nothing credible *contradicts* this account of things, and it does follow from the evidence we do have, and there is no *strong* reason to discount any of it. So this theory of events is a significant and plausible possibility that cannot be dismissed.

Another important point to add is that I reject Matthew's plot element of placing guards at the tomb. That is an obvious legendary embellishment upon Mark (as I argue in my chapter "The Plausibility of Theft"), and entails that the burial of Jesus was illegal, since it was in Joseph's tomb (Matt. 27:60) and could not have been moved (as the law would require) if guards were there before the Sabbath ended (Matt. 27:62–28:1). That would mean not only Joseph, but the entire Sanhedrin were violating the law by preventing Jesus from being buried in the criminals' graveyard as both law and justice required. That is far less plausible than Matthew making the whole thing up.

If the conclusions reached here are correct, and the core account in the Gospels (those details common to the majority) reflects real events, and the law of the day was as the sources suggest, then it is probable Jesus was finally buried by Joseph of Arimathea on Saturday night in the criminals' graveyard. On this theory, the body would *not* be in the tomb seen and later visited by the women and found empty. It would be somewhere else. As the available sources show, no one else saw the body being moved or knew where Jesus was really buried. Indeed, the resurrection was never actually *witnessed*, but only *inferred* days later from an empty tomb, and this leaves the door wide open to theories of theft or removal. This door is opened even wider by the curious fact that, for whatever reason, Joseph was never heard from again. He is conspicuously absent in Acts and is never mentioned in any of the Epistles. Therefore, he was clearly no longer around, or not interested in bringing the body's location to light. He probably returned to his home town, and either

soon passed away, or kept his silence out of sympathy with or a complete disinterest in the Christian cause.

Whatever the occasion, finding the body unexpectedly and inexplicably missing apparently led to hysterical surprise among the women[46] who went expecting to complete the burial.[47] And though it may be a dramatic embellishment, all accounts have the women being influenced by some unknown man or men at the site, and thus "primed" for interpreting the missing body as a resurrection,[48] who then in turn primed the disciples.[49] All of this, as well as the confusion and grief of losing a beloved leader and the resulting crisis of faith (which often leads people to latch onto anything to restore meaning and hope), more than establishes the "emotional excitement" requirement for hallucination.[50]

Simultaneous "group" hallucination, though possible, would not be necessary, since what one person sees and reports can infect the experience or memory of others in a group,[51] which in this case would help explain why the appearance accounts we have (of a risen Jesus *and* the men or "angels" at the tomb) are all so different from each other. But that isn't the only possibility. The original encounters may have been more prosaic than we are told, and only later embellished into the marvelous accounts now in the Gospels. For example, we might not be reading the actual words the women heard, but their *interpretation* of those words (or that of the disciples or evangelists). We might be looking at the nascence of the resurrection belief in their very own minds.

This is not implausible. The accusation of theft attributed to the Jews in Matthew (27:62–65, 28:11–15) suggests the Jews and Romans (or at least one Christian, the author of Matthew) believed removing a body from a tomb could inspire belief in a resurrection. And that may well be what happened. This "discovery" could easily have inspired such a belief when three other "proofs" came together at the same time to "confirm" it in the disciples' minds: new interpretations of scripture,[52] the spiritual visions or dreams of Peter and others,[53] and things Jesus said.[54] As to the latter, if Matthew's resurrection account is correct, even the Jews knew Jesus predicted his resurrection and understood what he meant (27:63–64), so his disciples surely would have, too. But even discounting Matthew, we can't prove Jesus *didn't* issue such predictions, and proposing he did is a viable explanatory hypothesis. For any fanatic or trusting follower would *want* to believe such promises of resurrection. They would certainly be primed to "interpret" unexplained events in

light of this expectation, especially as a means of escaping their grief and sense of failure.[55] And even if those things were not really said by Jesus, they could still be hopeful postmortem "reinterpretations" of things he really did say.[56] Scriptural clues sought out by a desperate group searching for new hope in the meaning of recent tragic events could easily have inspired these reinterpretations, and dreams or visions could have contributed as well. Thus, the second requirement for hallucination, "expectation," has adequate support.

If all this was true (and it could well have been), a simple mistake led to a hope-filled interpretation of the facts, causing a belief that a beloved teacher was "taken up" by God, which then snowballed into the accounts we now have. But all the while, the body of Jesus was resting with other executed criminals, eternally forgotten.

NOTES

1. Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave; A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), p. 1250 (§2.47).

2. Byron McCane, "Where No One Had Yet Been Laid: The Shame of Jesus' Burial," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. B. D. Chilton and C. A. Evans (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998), pp. 431–52; quote from p. 432.

3. I would like to thank Jeffery Jay Lowder, Glenn Miller, and others, whose advice and criticism contributed substantially to the final draft of this chapter.

4. Unless otherwise noted, the details given below derive from standard references: cf. s.v. "Jerusalem," "Mishnah," and "Talmud," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1974.

5. Jacob Neusner, *The Tosefta: An Introduction* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1992); Dov Zlotnik, trans., intro., and nn, *The Tractate "Mourning," Yale Judaica Series* 18 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), cf. p. 9. The complicated history of the latter text is related by Zlotnik, calling for caution in applying its contents to first-century Judaea. We will only trust it when it confirms other sources.

6. Cf. Steve Mason, ed., *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, v. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), esp. p.xxxvii; "Josephus" and "Philo," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1974; David Goldenberg, "Antiquities IV, 277 and 288, Compared with Early Rabbinic Law," *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, ed. Louis H. Feldman and Goli Hata (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), pp. 198–211.

7. Such decrees were inscribed at Rome, Sidon, Tyre, and Ascalon, in both Greek and Latin, according to Nina Jidejian, *Tyre Through the Ages* (Beirut: Dar el-Mashreq, 1969), p. 86.

8. Josephus, *The Jewish War* (hereafter: *JW*) 2.169–74.

9. *JW* 4.97–105, 4.406.

10. *JW* 2.289–92.

11. *JW* 6.334; cf. also 6.101.

12. *Embassy to Gaius* 153, 159, 161.

13. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* (hereafter: *AJ*) 16.160–73. For scholarship on this passage, cf. the bibliographies provided in Appendix J of vol. 7 of the Loeb edition of the works of Josephus, and the introductory paragraph to section 4.6 of Margaret Williams, *The Jews Among the Greeks & Romans: A Diasporan Sourcebook* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 93. Neither criminal nor civil law is singled out in the Augustan decree or in any other source, so *all* laws must have been meant.

14. Deut. 21:22–23; cf. Josh. 8:29, 10:26–27.

15. Cf. also D. J. Halperin, "Crucifixion, The Nahum Pesher and the Rabbinic Penalty of Crucifixion," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 32 (1981): 32–46, esp. p. 44.

16. Cf. s.v. "xulon," *Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). For Hebrew, cf. Halperin, "Crucifixion," with Strong's concordance and dictionary.

17. Different methods of attaching the body notwithstanding. There was no legally prescribed "shape" for the instrument of crucifixion. Josephus attests that the Romans could get very creative in that respect (*JW* 5.451), while Halperin ("Crucifixion") and J. A. Fitzmyer ("Crucifixion in Ancient Palestine, Qumran Literature, and the New Testament," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40 [1978]: 493–513) document how the Jews adapted their own hanging laws to Roman crucifixion practice.

18. *JW* 4.202, 260.

19. *JW* 4.317; cf. also *AJ* 4.264–65 and *JW* 3.377.

20. The association of this Deuteronomic law with crucifixion is in fact a pre-Christian motif predating Paul: cf. Fitzmyer, "Crucifixion i Ancient Palestine." Also, Halperin, "Crucifixion."

21. See also: Acts 2:23, 10:39, 13:29; 1 Peter 2:24.

22. Eventually, according to the Talmud, it was held that three things were required: execution, shameful burial, and the rotting of the flesh from the bones (*Sanhedrin* 47b), because temple sacrifices and the Day of Atonement *alone* could not atone for the dead (e.g., *Yoma* 85b; *Avodah Zarah* 46b; *Berachoth* 60a, 62b; *Menachoth* 4b; see also *Mishnah, Yoma* 8.8b). Probably, since the dead technically cannot repent, the pain of the grave was allowed to work to this end. Although this might have been a late development designed to rationalize atonement after the destruction of the temple, that seems unlikely. For example, the logic of reburial (see below) presupposes some theological purpose for rotting away the flesh.

23. *In Flaccum*, 83.

24. John 19:31. A modern forensic examination of the recovered leg bones was conducted by Dr. Nicu Haas: cf. Ian Wilson, *Jesus: The Evidence* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), pp. 130–31, which includes photographs of the breaks. The evidence is also discussed by Fitzmyer, "Crucifixion," and in Nicu Haas, "Anthropological Observations on the Skeletal Remains from Giv'at ha-Mivtar," *Israel Exploration Journal* 20 (1970): 38–59.

25. Mark 15:43. The others simply take it for granted that Joseph would do this and meet no opposition: Matthew 27:57–58; Luke 23:50–52; John 19:38. Joseph is also assumed to have acted on behalf of the Jews in Acts 13:29.

26. Mark 15:44 (perhaps explaining why Joseph needed "courage" to approach Pilate early).

27. Mark 15:40 says the only supporters present were women. Matthew 27:55–56 concurs. Luke 23:49 lists no one by name, but says "those familiar with him" were there, no mention of kin. John 19:25–27 conspicuously places the mother of Jesus at the scene, but no male kin who would be responsible for care of the body.

28. From "Burial," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1974, v. 4, col. 1517.

29. Possibly very old indeed: cf. 1 Kings 13:21–22 and Jer. 22:18–19.

30. Jerusalem Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 6.10.2.b–c, cf. Ps. 26:9.

31. Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 7.4a, d. The same sentence is given for "profaning the Sabbath" or "sorcery" (7.4e, i), which might also be crimes suggested by Pharisees as grounds for accusing Jesus during his ministry, at least as portrayed in the Gospels. Jesus' treatment of his own parents (Matt. 12:48–49, Mark 3:31–35, Luke 8:19–21) and his teachings about how others were to treat their parents (Matt. 8:21–22, Luke 9:59–60; cf. also Matt. 10:35, 19:29, and Luke 12:53, 14:26) might have been perceived as violating other commandments that warranted death by stoning (e.g., Deut. 21:18–21). At any rate, *theologically*, Jesus had to be reckoned with the "sinners," not the "bloodthirsty men." And that required a stoning offense.

32. This refers to the ancient Jewish practice of secondary burial: a corpse would receive a funeral and burial, then when the flesh rotted away (typically some months to a year later) the bones would be gathered, cleaned, and placed in an ossuary (a small box or chest for holding the bones of the reburied—archaeologists have recovered hundreds of examples). As the Mishnah says, "When the flesh has rotted, they collect the bones and bury them in their appropriate place" (*Sanhedrin* 6.6a; cf. Talmud *Mo'ed Katan* 8a, tractate *Semahot* 12.6–9; Tosefta, *Sanhedrin*, 9.8c, etc.). Hence the corpses of condemned men, which have to be buried in the criminals' graveyard, can eventually be reburied where they belong, in their ancestral tombs, where they would have been buried in the first place if not for the disgraceful manner of their death. This was probably allowed because of the theory (mentioned above) that the rotting away of the flesh atones for sin, so the condemned can then be reckoned among the righteous. It follows that in none of these sources can an indiscriminate "mass" grave be meant. The graveyard of the condemned was probably just like any other, with tombs and niches, since families had to identify and recover the bones of individuals after many months.

33. Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 47b; Josephus agrees: all those crucified were not only buried before sunset, but were regarded as "condemned" (*JW* 4.317) and dishonored.

34. John 18:31. This has support in the Talmud, which claims this right was taken away forty years before the destruction of the temple (*Sanhedrin* 41a), hence around 30 CE. However, the passage in question reveals a good deal of confusion among rabbis, leaving the date questionable, all the more so since "forty" is a theologically significant number and thus might not be exact.

35. S. Zeitlin argues in *Who Crucified Jesus?* (New York: Bloch, 1964) that the Sanhedrin had the right to execute Jews for purely religious offenses, and were only denied the right to execute for political or ordinary criminal offenses.

36. *Sanhedrin* 12.6b–d, cf. Deut. 17:7. Note also that Fitzmyer, "Crucifixion," and

Halperin, "Crucifixion," both argue that crucifixion itself was a method of execution under Jewish Law.

37. Matthew 27:60 reports the tomb belonged to Joseph. Luke 23:53 and John 19:41 corroborate the point. Though they do not specify an owner, both agree the tomb had never been used, which implies a private tomb (in contrast, the criminals' graveyard was public and in regular use). Mark 15:46 alone says neither, but he doesn't deny these details. So it is reasonable to follow the majority, if anything at all.

38. Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 35a–35b, *Yevamoth* 7a, *Baba Bathra* 100b, *Shabbath* 150–51.

39. Talmud *Beitzah* 6a, 22a; *Sanhedrin* 26b.

40. This is disputed. The Synoptics place a Passover meal the night before (Luke 22:7–15, Mark 14:12–16, Matt. 26:17–19), beginning the holy day on which Jesus was executed, placing his death on the first day of Passover (reckoning days as the Jews did from sundown to sundown). John 18:39 also implies Jesus was killed "on the Passover." But John 19:31 says "the day of that Sabbath was great," which means Passover began Friday *or* Saturday, while John 19:14 puts the execution on "the preparation day of the Passover," implying the day *before* Passover. The theological theme of 1 Corinthians 5:7 (and John 1:29 and 19:36) depicts Jesus as the Paschal lamb, which is also slaughtered the day before, and the hour of Jesus' death corresponds to the hour of the Paschal sacrifice as reported by Josephus (*JW* 6.423). However, theology aside, if any of the story is true, it is more likely Jesus was actually killed the next day, on the first day of Passover. The Synoptics are unanimous in this. And John's actual narrative doesn't contradict them: see commentary on John 18:28 and 19:31 in David Stern's *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 6th ed. (Clarkesville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications: 1999). According to Stern, Passover meals are taken two nights in a row (see also "Passover Seder," *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* [New York: Macmillan, 1996]), and John mentions both: 13:1 and 18:28, with 13:29 also anticipating the second meal, the preparation for which was allowed during the holy day itself (hence John 19:14). Thus John seems to place the crucifixion *between* the Seder and the *chagigah*, hence on the Passover. John's *theological* desire to equate Jesus with the Paschal lamb may have confused his narrative, and thus obscured the true story captured more clearly in the Synoptics.

41. Mark 15:34–37, Matt. 27:46–50, Luke 23:44–46. However, there was a theological motive for assigning such a time of death (cf. previous note), which may have overridden the truth.

42. Mark 16:1 and Luke 24:1 (ritual washing and anointing were among the required burial rites).

43. *Semahot* 13.5 and 10.8 respectively (cf. Zlotnik, "The Tractate Mourning," pp. 84, 74).

44. Midrash Rabbah, Ruth 3:2(43); Talmud *Eiruvin* 44a and *Shabbath* 43b. Also, *Nazir* 64b, following the Mishnah, allows moving any bodies not formally buried.

45. Cf. McCane, "Where No One Had Yet Been Laid."

46. According to Mark 16:8; Matt. 28:8; Luke 24:5; John 20:2, 20:11–18.

47. According to Mark 16:1 and Luke 24:1.

48. Mark 16:5–7; Luke 24:4–8; Matt. 28:5–7; John 20:12–15.

49. Matt. 28:8, 28:16–18; Mark 16:10ff.; Luke 24:9ff.; John 20:2ff.

50. According to Gary Habermas and J. P. Moreland, *Beyond Death: Exploring the Evidence for Immortality*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), pp. 398. Their second requirement is "expectation" (see below). For the theory that the appearances of Jesus were hallucinations, see Keith Parsons's chapter in the present volume; though for specific discussion of the nature of "epiphany," see sections 5.9, 8.1, and 8.5 of my chapter, "The Spiritual Body of Christ."

51. Cf. Daniel Schacter and Joseph Coyle, *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains, and Societies Reconstruct the Past* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Elizabeth Loftus and James Doyle, *Eyewitness Testimony: Civil and Criminal*, 3rd ed. (Charlottesville, VA: Lexis Law, 1997).

52. According to 1 Cor. 15:4 and John 20:9. The possibilities are legion, e.g., Hosea 6:2; Ps. 16:10; Jon. 2:6, 10; etc.

53. According to 1 Cor. 15:5–8, to be interpreted in light of Gal. 1:11–12 and Acts 9:3–7, 22:6–11, 26:12–19, as well as the example of Stephen (7:55–56), which was clearly just a private "vision," or the visitation upon, and witness of, the multitude (2:2–47, possibly informing 1 Cor. 15:6), which was more like a "feeling" of Christ's presence (cf. Gal. 1:16). Examples of divine communication through dreams: Acts 10:9–17, 16:9–10 (cf. Gal. 2:2, Matt. 2:12), 27:21–25. For more detailed discussion, see sections 5.9, 8.1, and 8.5 of my chapter, "The Spiritual Body of Christ and the Legend of the Empty Tomb."

54. Cf. Mark 8:31, 9:9–10, 9:31, 10:33–34; Matt. 16:21, 17:22–23, 20:18–19; Luke 9:22, 18:31–33.

55. On this kind of application of "cognitive dissonance" theory, cf. Adela Collins, "The Empty Tomb in the Gospel According to Mark," in *Hermes and Athena: Biblical Exegesis and Philosophical Theology*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Thomas Flint (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), pp. 109–10 (and works cited there); and N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), pp. 697–701. Wright objects on four grounds: there were flaws in the original studies, expectations were different for the disciples, something must still happen to direct the effect, and cognitive dissonance did not affect other messianic movements. None of these objections are very strong, given that the needed data is extremely limited, fairly late, and of uncertain reliability, and I do not propose that cognitive dissonance functioned alone, but rather stimulated and affected the influence and interpretation of other postmortem events I list, events unique to Christian history. As to flaws in the grounding science, Wright inexplicably ignores all work done in the past forty years: cf. Judson Mills and Eddie Harmon-Jones, *Cognitive Dissonance: Progress on a Pivotal Theory in Social Psychology* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1999) (which is not exhaustive, nor does it include the dozens of dissertations and studies completed in the twenty-first century).

56. Esp. John 2:19–22 (Mark 14:58, 15:29) and Mark 14:28 (w. 16:7), but also: Matthew 12:40, 26:61, 27:40, 27:63; Luke 11:29–32, 13:32; John 7:33–36, 16:16–17.

11

FINANCIAL ASPECTS OF THE RESURRECTION

J. DUNCAN M. DERRETT

INTRODUCTION

It is much too early to claim (as some have done) that Jesus has failed. But in one respect success cannot be denied him. Enormous numbers of "white-collar" operatives have been maintained by the earning public, dead and alive, while they issued uncashable checks and performed services the value of which no one can verify. Even the promise of eternal life is odd: with whom would one wish to spend eternity? In addition to priests, monks, and nuns, the centuries have been fecund with that strange scion of the intellect, the Bible teacher, whose copious writings contain hypotheses, discussions of hypotheses, and reports of such discussions, a gallimaufry of coagulated conjectures and cross-conjectures fit to confound the most skillful race-course computer.[1] And of these "white-collar" people many would fear that if the Resurrection were held to be nonmiraculous, i.e., within nature, their own livelihoods must be abandoned. A book which proposed that Jesus survived and was cremated (as was Saul: 1 Sam. 31:12–13) while the remains of Passover lambs were being burnt[2] was received with disapprobation.[3] This was not because the conjecture was too far-fetched (what in the New Testament is not far-fetched?), but because reviewers must appear to support a

nonnatural resurrection, whatever their private doubts,[4] lest they lose status and, from being members of a *magisterium*, must descend to the rank of teachers about Diogenes the Cynic, about Socrates, or about Philo the Jew. And at the risk of appearing spiteful they will discourage strangers from joining their dance.[5]

Meanwhile it is a fact that crucified victims may be taken down alive.[6] Here I wish to show that in this as in many other cases the solution to the problem, "What happened to Jesus' body?" is *cui bono*—whom did any scenario profit? With this, key problems raised by our self-contradictory New Testament story may be solved.

HOW EASY WAS THE APOSTLES' COMMODITY TO SELL?

The disciples themselves had, on four separate grounds, a most unpromising product to sell. If they undertook to sell it in competition with Cynics and Buddhists, who already had a share in the market, they must tolerate neither interference nor obstruction. Their packaging must be perfect. As for the discouragements they must face, first, if Jesus taught that the classic fetishes of Jewry (like the Scapegoat) were nonsense, or perverse (like the Temple service), except so far as they alerted the pious to Yahweh's concern for Israel, a host of conservative people would object, especially in Jerusalem where the cult was an excellent money spinner. Their lives would be undermined, and the highly prized distinction between Jew and gentile would be prejudiced. Influential Jews would react violently. Nor were pious Jews the only opponents of a reformed spirituality. Direct financial objections to the apostles' missions are credibly reported (if only as examples) at Acts 16:19; 19:24–27.

Jesus' own shameful execution was a second discouragement to any potential follower (Matt. 13:21; Acts 4:18, 7:57, 28:22). Admittedly opposition, even martyrdom, strengthened sects.[7] But Jesus calmly predicted persecution for himself and his followers indefinitely.[8] The Sanhedrin could have counseled the leader to be more tactful (cf. Matt. 9:14, 12:35, 15:12, 19:3; Luke 13:31–32) and if he was obstinate have him stabbed in an alleyway. What prevented this was the fear that the crowd surrounding him would prove to be a sufficient bodyguard (Matt. 21:26, 46; Luke 19:48). This forced them to seek state aid, which perhaps many would have been reluctant to do.[9]

The third discouragement was the continual falling-off of sympathetic objectors, reasonably or not (Matt. 11:6, 15:12; John 6:60, 66). Potential recruits hopefully stood at the door of the End Time, when they might acquire a permanent and secure home (Matt. 8:20)—perhaps a fool's paradise?

The fourth discouragement was that Jesus' message never admitted as operationally valid the common principles of profit and loss. Such principles were educationally useful, but only by way of analogy (Matt. 12:11). The inherent contradiction needs to be observed. Jesus talked about money and money's worth in his parables (that of the Great Supper is an example), and some of them contain actual coins,[10] while the laws relating to usury and agency were utilized in his parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16). He mixed with people who knew the value of money;[11] "publicans and sinners" made their and others' assets work for them irrespectively of public opinion. A society proud of its solidarity would find disconcerting Jesus' indifference to conventional respectability. Meanwhile Jesus recruited a man who knew revenue practice (Matt. 9:9) and his own group needed a treasurer (John 12:6; 13:29). He attempted to recruit a rich enquirer (Luke 18:18–23), and his failure was a disappointment. Yet God could negotiate such an obstacle, pushing rich men through the eye of a needle (Matt. 19:24), a task a thoughtful Buddhist knew how to accomplish.[12] Jesus' inner cabinet included members keenly alert to financial gain: the fates of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11)[13] show that the earliest church knew how to attract rich recruits and how to exploit their capital. And Paul himself was far from being financially careless.[14] He knew what would impress money-conscious folk in Jerusalem (Acts 21:23–24, 26).

Concurrently with this strange shrewdness one might teach not only that animal passions and the natural instinct to acquire and hoard can be curbed (an everyday proposition), but also that they could be harnessed, channeled, and pruned (John 15:2) in the interests of a true righteousness, the profit from which would be enjoyed by the individual in the world to come (Matt. 19:21; Luke 14:14). The talent for business is in fact given to a fraction of humanity. One boy in ten will successfully lend money to his pals at 50 percent interest. If to work at the treadmill of commerce and to get fat at others' expense is an equivocal gift, Jesus' teaching (like the Buddha's) utilized it. On the one hand disciples must not be activated by greed—they must practice self-denial—and on the other, the successful accumulator

exists to be squeezed. Ananias's mistake was to *keep back* a fraction of the voluntary donation he proposed to the church's funds.

So there was a level at which the successful entrepreneur and the noncommercial public can meet, in which the former makes an exchange with the latter (cash for esteem), but the latter need not be ashamed to share the gains of the former (Matt. 19:21), an anomaly which must have been a stumbling block to many (see 2 Cor. 8:1–15; 1 Cor. 9:11; Rom. 15:25–28). For a special form of asceticism, resembling athleticism but spiritual, not physical, was taught by Jesus and Paul after him.[15] The first step to making a true servant of the creator out of nature's raw materials was introspection, the identification of oneself as a slave (Rom. 6:6, 17) to "unrighteousness." And this was additionally discouraging to seekers after short-term gains. Missionaries had to contend with these four discouragements at once, varying in severity and intractability with unpredictable circumstances.

Further, one who bought Jesus' package loved his enemies, suppressed the temptation to divorce an enraged wife, turned the other cheek, failed to exact debts, and preferred to die rather than be unjust. One could live (as some Essenes tried to do) in a kind of notional commune with like-minded people, though that forfeited the support, influence, and power of the generality of the real world, which one had necessarily alienated by withdrawing from a mutually supporting society. That *hasidim* did indeed live such lives is the tradition,[16] but their mutual support did not protect them from the Romans, or the results of the first Roman war. So the disciples' commodity was hard to sell. This very fact can be tendered with some confidence as a genuine witness to the Resurrection,[17] for no one would peddle Jesus' message without the most startling impetus. And no alternative has ever been offered.

What was in their favor? What could outweigh these discouragements —and attract such a man as Ananias? Were not the many who had nothing to lose (e.g., slaves and the dirt poor, note 1 Cor. 1:26) Jesus' principal supporters? When it came to a crisis they were not (Mark 15:13–15). He was buried by one of the richest men available (Matt. 27:57) with a taste for holiness, while Jesus' comrades disappeared (Mark 14:50–52). There *were* eccentric businessmen (Luke 19:2–9), and monied women (Mark 15:41; Luke 8:3), who accepted his "irrational" message, and in that sense bought it. His and his "apostles'" preaching tours were funded; and it does not matter whether those of them who carried no bag or money-belt (Mark 6:8) were fed

well or poorly, so long as they shared what their hosts prepared for them (Luke 10:7–8). The maxim that the "labourer" is worthy of his "hire" seems to have been heard (1 Tim 5:18). Was there a dearth of hosts? The behavior of the Samaritans is exclaimed against (Luke 9:53), which suggests that Jews in general were hospitable and so were gentiles if they were not too fastidious (Matt. 8:8).

There was also an aspect that appealed to the well-to-do. In Jesus' "irrational" economy there was a peculiar balance between input and output. As one was prepared to invest in moral self-training (not, for example, exploiting those whom one could easily exploit)[18] so there arose a sense of doing for the creator what he/she could not do for him/herself: one relished becoming Yahweh's creditor instead of being his debtor (Prov. 19:17), so one visualizes oneself as the guest of many little hosts (Luke 16:4). The mind presents this as a religious proposition. One who looks after the poor gains a superiority which mere financial exchange cannot supply.[19] The trustees of charitable funds gain a vicarious reputation and patronage, the semblance of generosity (Ps. 112:5; Prov. 22:7; 2 Cor. 9:7) which compensates them if their income is poor. In that world the idea reigned that if one pays another to be righteous one becomes righteous oneself. So in Israel a conversionist movement need never lack rich patrons.

DID RESURRECTION HELP THE BUSINESS?

Who will ask me to prove that news of the Resurrection of Jesus not only inspired (1 Cor. 15:12) the first kerygma,[20] but also made it easier to attract potential converts? Jesus' strange experience *even as truth* was a ready-prepared parable.[21] It could be construed, absurd as it seems, as an earnest[22] of the general resurrection. A doctrine of resurrection is now part of normative Judaism[23] and was then a notion of the Pharisees.[24] It could be propounded that Jesus' rising from the dead[25] was God's raising Jesus up[26]—a tendentious but desirable analysis when evil spirits could invade bodies (Matt. 12:45; Acts 16:18, 18:15–16).[27] That somehow seemed to justify Jesus' extraordinary proceedings while alive, and somehow ratified his teaching. He could seem to offer to his followers (Matt. 5:3, 8:11, 21:31) a place in his (future) kingdom (Matt. 19:28) and perpetual bliss (Matt.

25:21). Whatever they denied themselves in life (as he had) would be amply compensated for hereafter (Mark 10:30). Those (for example, Sadducees) who did not believe in an afterlife world would reject this type of propaganda. If one does not deny its appeal one must admit that the argument must be made to stand up if business people are to be attracted, if it offers them respectability in their own eyes and others'.

PROOF OF THE RESURRECTION

People will accept what they want to believe. The fact that the teacher was said to have risen from the dead, and that, moreover, Yahweh had raised him up, would be interesting as proving that resurrection (a theory) exists (1 Cor. 15:12–13). The disciples could offer two "proofs," neither of them worthy of *belief*, if one defines "belief" as an individual's being convinced by sufficient cogent testimony. The first proof was that the tomb in which Jesus was laid was found to be empty (save, some said, grave clothes!);[28] the second was that Jesus, some time after he had been buried, appeared to various, selected, persons (whom he did not touch).[29] As for the first proof, even if the body had been missing, there were explanations for its disappearance which were not excluded. It could have been stolen;[30] or Jesus was simply reburied (John 20:2); or he could have revived and been rescued.[31] The appearances lack one feature which an appearance from the dead calls for—none gives us any information which we did not have before. The persons to whom Jesus appeared did not utilize their opportunities to verify a host of unsolved queries—Jesus did not think it worthwhile to complete their education.[32] The one question (we are told) disciples put to him was brushed off brusquely (Acts 1:6–7), so making my point for me. Like the Buddha in his last hours, Jesus believed (wrongly: Acts 10:13–15) that he had provided them with all they needed, or to put it another way, the disciples imagined they knew enough.

True, two morally acceptable male witnesses would, in Jewish law, be competent to establish a fact by their unanimous testimony. But no court is compelled to accept such testimony where there is a likelihood that a witness is disqualified by relationship, by want of religious status (orthodoxy), or by his having an interest at stake in the outcome of the enquiry.[33] It is such an interest that will occupy us.

INTERESTED WITNESSES AND THEIR PROGRAM

Granted that the disciples held it worthwhile to continue the mission on which they had embarked (rather than reverting to their former trades: John 21:3); and granted that the increase in status and promise of earning-free maintenance and valuable control of charitable funds (Acts 6:1–4) were sufficient to keep their interest alive, could any event have been sufficient to overcome the discouragement of their leader having been executed as an impostor (Matt. 27:63; 2 Cor. 6:8), and many of their number being "wanted" as his collaborators (Acts 4:2)? Their hope was to lie low, as John 21 suggests, and John hints elsewhere (7:13, 19:38, 20:19). Their womenfolk (save Peter's mother-in-law?) could hardly have counseled any other strategy. I conjecture that (as hinted above) an event could have overcome doubts, in which Jesus himself can well have intervened!

When a severely injured individual shows signs of death but is not brain-dead,[34] the possibility that he/she may revive is notorious, and was so then. Cases occur continually.[35] Brain damage is possible in such scenarios, but perfect recovery is common. The patient never claims the recovery is "miraculous": those who gain by one's revival (the mother, but less often the prospective heirs of the "deceased") will make the claim. The revived do not start new religions. But the case of Jesus and his disciples was different. They were immersed in a cult in which the divine recompense of the just, especially the righteous sufferer, was axiomatic.[36] Jesus himself regarded crucifixion as a step to a new life (Matt. 20:19), not excluding cult members from a similar fate (Matt. 10:39, 16:25, 23:34; Mark 10:38–40; Luke 11:49).

Faced with an actual revival our disciples have no qualm, and there are those two "proofs" in their hands. The tomb was "empty" and the deceased had actually appeared alive, and the alternate explanation, that they had seen a ghost, could be refuted (Luke 24:4; John 21:5). How were they to present it? This is where entrepreneurial skill comes in. I once explained the conundrum to a layman and his objection was that the disciples were pledged to poverty (Mark 10:28; cf. Matt. 12:1), and included many unversed in the ways of the world, simple fisherfolk. But this is to undervalue Jewish traditional gifts. For many centuries they supplied international traders, financiers.[37] They guarded tax-farming contracts and enterprises of merchants or kings. They were active where large profits were to be made. Their Aramaic was the *lingua franca* of the

Persian empire until Alexander's Greeks provided an alternative. No wonder Jesus' parables are preoccupied with finance and valuables.

On the reappearance of Jesus after his burial the obvious question would arise: "What profit is there in this for us?" They knew the potential of the gospel exactly. Buddhist missionaries making great strides, with the help of rich patrons, through every part of Asia confirmed that a gospel recommending strict control of personal impulses and appetites, recommending seeking what was real, free, and whole, against the background of the miserable life which then obtained, had a distinct potential—it enhanced the individual—and those who managed it had a viable program to follow. The hostility of a section of the Jewish aristocracy seemed (a backhanded compliment) to guarantee this, and meanwhile "it was neither fitting that he should die again, nor that he should remain on the earth in his then state: death he had already sounded and survived, while for his departure he had previously prepared them."[38]

Granted that the one who had conquered death was the same who had taught how to manipulate Mother Nature, his revival was capital for his followers. It was essential to the scheme that he should not live to contradict or embarrass what was already a going concern. Inconvenient disclosure or failure of impetus could undermine the whole. But that problem was soon solved. Gas gangrene, with delirium, not to speak of serial organ collapse, would promptly remove the teacher from the scene. So what should be done with the corpse? Here we must look more closely at the question: *cui bono?*

Naturally we have no record of their secret debates. What if they buried Jesus in some convenient place? A wonder-working rabbi would be of interest to his natal family. But what of Joseph of Arimathea, who had made the initial investment? He had been cheated by the untimely revival. His own family had expected to be helped on the Last Day by Jesus' reviving along with them. They would have wished his bones to revive one at least of their own corpses (2 Kings 13:21) meanwhile. How could the disciples avoid a dispute with Joseph or his family? They will have refused to repay Joseph his outlay. Joseph's lien on the former corpse would take months to establish, for a "righteous" man (Luke 23:50) *will* ask for his rights! Jesus' revival disappointed folk whose interests in a family tomb were real (cf. Josh. 24:32). Meanwhile Jesus' blood relations, whose skepticism (Mark 3:21–32; John 7:3–5) is dwelt on in the gospels more than Joseph's piety, would have

claimed him dead as they tried to claim him living. The corpse of a wonder-working rabbi would be valuable as a magnet for the speculators who auctioned scarce grave plots (1 Kings 13:31; 2 Kings 23:17–18); also to work necromantic spells; to provide a place of pilgrimage; or a scene for "incubation";[39] and as a source of prophecy to solve all kinds of problems (lost property, etc.). In all these roles he would have been a huge income earner for that lowly breed, the custodians of tombs. Government would soon put a finger in the pie, and cream off a percentage of the offerings. But what remained would be considerable, and go on forever. Even the aroma of a bone of Jesus would have been worth a fortune; and there would have been more bones than pieces of the True Cross, or skulls of John the Baptist.

Moreover, if the corpse of Jesus were in any hands but their own, the disciples' mission would be ruined. A closed corpus of authority would be desirable. In every controversy (could gentiles not be circumcised?) the leader for the time being (Peter?) would decide one way, and another would consult the Holy Spirit in prayer, and answer differently. Then *hey presto!* a voice from Jesus' tomb would provide the last word—or would it? Some disciples might have wished Jesus dead anyway.[40] For him to be available in a tomb would be no joke, the tomb being the center of a cult.[41] A fee for the custodians would be the only real outcome.[42] It is agreed that a disappearance in the nature of an ascension would enable access to Jesus by authorized persons to be made in prayer: using the Spirit (Luke 24:45) they could avoid traveling to a tomb.

Fortunately there was one line of approach which Jewish sentiment and public fancy would buy. The disciples could take advantage of it, provided they acted at once, with a normative *and* creative decision. The only serious doubt was how long to report Jesus had survived on earth.[43]

THE ASCENSION

It is common to take the Ascension as a fancy developed[44] by Luke (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9–11) which one need not take literally: it was a fillip to Jesus' status and a hinge between his and the church's lives which Luke, here no historian, intends believers to understand.[45] He ascended, like a hero or an angel, into heaven.[46] Then and there (before Luke) the meaning would be

obvious. The body did not decay,[47] nor atone for the deceased's sins,[48] for he had none.

Throughout Jewish history, there have been people so holy[49] that they were "taken up"; they entered heaven alive.[50] Enoch (Gen. 5:24; 1 En. 39:3); the patriarchs; Elijah (2 Kings 2) and Ezra come to mind (4 Ezra [first century CE] 6:26, 8:19, 14:9). Eliezer, servant of Abraham,[51] Serah daughter of Asher, Bithiah daughter of Pharaoh, Phineas son of Eleazar,[52] Othniel son of Kenaz (Jud. 3:9–11),[53] and Hiram king of Tyre were added to the list. It is said that these names tend to appear amongst the Nine, Ten, or Thirteen who entered Paradise alive in somewhat "late texts."[54] But this was possible because the idea had long been familiar. Therefore the succinct Ascension of Jesus at Luke 24:51 is thoroughly Jewish,[55] even if the words "and he was carried up into heaven" are not original (cf. Luke 9:51). Assumption accounts provide an honorific climax to the righteous life of a very notable figure.[56]

Moses, whose burial (by Yahweh or his angels) is stated emphatically (see below), is considered by some to be alive still and "serving by the Throne." If the disciples explained the empty tomb, claiming an ascension had occurred, they would have been ridiculed by the Sanhedrin (cf. Matt. 27:63–64, 28:11–15); but that would not have mattered: their opposition would have been fueled by jealousy (Matt. 27:18; Acts 17:5).[57] As a notorious wonder-worker, Jesus was obviously very holy (John 3:2; 9:17, 31, 33) and that he should ascend bodily into heaven like Enoch or Elijah was only proper. Pagans would not be at all surprised.[58] Gautama the Buddha made more than one trip to heaven, and once even used a ladder to come down,[59] which was said to be retained as a relic!

All this is not to deny that Jesus' ascension differed from Jewish and pagan parallels in an important respect. Jesus, once "ascended," continued to be a source of inspiration and expectation (of the Second Coming at an undetermined date: Acts 1:7, 11d). He was simply lodged where he could no longer be an embarrassment. His teaching needed to be supplemented by the ministry of a new age, that of the Spirit, or he could intervene at a critical moment from heaven (Acts 9:3–6). By coincidence Gautama and the future Buddha, Maitreya, the first already ascended, the second not yet descended to earth, perform, according to Buddhists, similar functions.

When we come to the Appearances, the position is just as favorable. Pagan gods appeared when they chose.[60] Disappearance leads naturally to

expectation of reappearance without warning. One who has entered the realm above can, if he chooses, appear on earth, *even at several places at once* (Luke 24:34) to people seeing with the mind as well as the eye. Dives thought Lazarus would (Luke 16:27–28) and Eliezer did (Bab. Talm., *B.B.* 58a). Elijah is said to have done so often. Appearance in hell is another matter. But some said that, like the Buddha and many Bodhisattvas, Jesus managed even that (1 Pet. 3:19, 4:6)!

THE DISPOSAL OF THE BODY

The only fly in that ointment was the corpse itself. My original suggestion, that it was cremated,[61] a method of disposal normal amongst Greeks and Romans, has been exclaimed against as hostile to Pharisaic expectations that Jewish corpses (or a bone of each) should await the general resurrection. But Jesus had already been "resurrected," and Isaac was said to have been cremated,[62] to have revived and been received into heaven notwithstanding (Matt. 8:11, 22:31–32). I feel that the embarrassment can be avoided. I have said that a secret between six people is no secret: moreover there is hardly a public transaction in Asia which is exempt from the unselfconscious observation of small boys. But the answer lies closer to my hand.

Deuteronomy tells us (on Joshua's authority) how Moses, the friend of Yahweh (Exod. 33:11) died. "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord" (Deut. 32:50) "And he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-peor [E. of the Jordan]: but no man knows his sepulchre to this day." (Deut. 34:5–6) The manner of Moses' death is explained more fully at Deuteronomy 32:50. ". . . and die in the mount whither you go up, and be gathered to your people; as Aaron your brother died in mount Hor [unlocated], and was gathered to his people." Jesus was believed by some to be Moses' equal (Matt. 17:3) or superior (Heb. 3:3). So he indeed was if he was able to get behind Mother Nature as Moses had hardly been able to do (Exod. 32:1–10, 22; Num. 25:1–3). Jesus represented a step forward in theology, in practical psychology and in sociology and this cannot be annulled by crucifixions and resurrections, misunderstandings or frauds. His teachings may not be the heart of the biblical story of Jesus and the apparent catastrophe of that Passover, but they are the heart

of Jesus' significance. His disciples knew that. They could have buried him in an anonymous desert, fancying themselves an angelic burial party, for there is no lack of desert thereabouts. One need not go to Moab for the body to be beyond finding (see 2 Kings 2:16–18). By coincidence to bury in such a way suited the victims of tyrants (Testament of Moses 6:3).

When pagans wanted to find Moses' tomb, and a plausible site was offered them, those below thought they saw it above, and those above thought they saw it below.[63] Legend apart, all that was needed was a place that could not be used for pilgrimage, much more remote and less conspicuous than St. Catherine's monastery in the Sinai desert. The disciples could have found such a place, and if any pair of them whispered where it was, not even they themselves could lead anyone to it. Remember how well the Qumran caves and their contents were hidden, not to speak of the kingly tombs of Egypt which eluded even tomb robbers. Meanwhile, the idea of an ascension would satisfy all contemporary believers. One remembers John 6:61–62, which fits our hypothesis. Jesus should not be inferior to Elijah (2 Kings 2:11), his forerunner, or to Enoch[64] who seems to have done little besides begetting Methuselah, but was nonetheless "faithful."[65]

Here was the scenario: here the origin of the fanciful theologizing which has served the Christian faith until unsympathetic skeptics tried to demolish what remains of useful legend. What was real about Jesus remains in his teaching, but it must be accepted that it required authoritative supplementation. He must have considered what would happen after he was gone, and if I have visualized the institution of the Eucharist correctly he could count on consultations under his chairmanship (Matt. 18:20) after his death. This would take care of the suspicion that the disciples were activated solely by impulse or simply banal motives (Acts 15:28). He would be with them as he had expended himself for them and their successors. Even on earth he communed with God as other wonder-workers had done. Moses was said still to stand and serve, but Jesus will sit as judge. Disputes as to what happened to the body[66] are best settled as I now suggest: what will have weighed most heavily with those who took possession of his corpse will have been its monetary value. Rather than that, or any fragment of it, should enrich others, they disposed of it themselves. He was much more useful to them in heaven.

"Questions of historicity were treated as alien and irrelevant," says J. Neusner.[67] What counted was the paradigm, and, the paradigm in this case

being that of Moses or Elijah, the ideal communications between God and man were never anchored in an identifiable tomb. A one-time happening may be an all-time paradigm.[68]

NOTES

1. A. C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (London: HarperCollins, 1992); W. R. Telford, "Modern Biblical Interpretation," in *Biblical World*, vol. 2, ed. J. Barton (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 427–49.

2. J. D. M. Derrett, *The Anastasis: The Resurrection of Jesus as an Historical Event* (Shipston-on-Stour: Drinkwater, 1982), index: "cremation." See also Lev. 4:21b; J. G. Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1941), pp. 177–79. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Coronet Books, 1971), p. 1516.

3. Pheme Perkins, *C.B.Q.* 45 (1983): 684–85; Gerald O'Collins, *Heythrop Journal* (January 1985): 59–60; Haufe, *T.L.Z.* 110, no. 4 (1985): 286–87; Wenner Georg Kümmel, *T.R.* 50, no. 2 (1985): 158–59; Otto Merk, *Gnomon* 59, no. 8 (1987): 761–63; Hans Hübner, *T.R.* 54, no. 3 (1989): 290–91. Many visualize the Resurrection as did Piero della Fracesca in his famous painting (1462–64) at Borgo San Sepolcro or Hans Memling (1430–94), "Martyrdom of St. Sebastian at the Louvre" (Flemish School). If Christ revived *nonmiraculously* he will not have resembled anyone's hero. D. F. Strauss, *Life of Jesus* (EV; London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1906), pars. 139–40, 733–40.

4. On the tragicomic experiences of Prof. Willi Marxsen, see Derrett, *Anastsis* (n2 above), index: "Marxsen, W.," esp. pp. 14–15. It is the *sponsorship* maintaining New Testament teaching that decides this issue, not the Transrhenane pontiffs themselves.

5. Hübner, cited at n3 above.

6. Herodotus 7.194; Josephus *Life* 420–21, *Josephus: The Life; Against Apion*, vol. 1, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), Loeb Classical Library, p. 155. Mishnah, *Yev.* 16.3; Tosefta, *Yev.* 14.4c; Palestinian Talmud 5, p. 15c; Iamblichus, *Babyloniaca* 2 and 21. R. Hercher, *Erotici Scriptores Graeci* (Leipzig, 1858), 1.221, 229.

7. Acts 5:41. For the "Maccabean Martyrs" (117 BCE), see M. Schatkin, "The Maccabean Martyrs," *V.C.* 28 (1974): 97–113. J. W. van Henten, ed., *Die Entstehung der jüdischen Martyrologie* (Leiden: Brill, 1989). In Qumran the first and possibly the second were vital to the sect's life: G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin, 1987), pp. 30–35; M. A. Knibb, *The Qumran Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 7–10.

8. Matt. 5:10–12; 10:23, 38; 13:21; Mark 10:30; John 15:20. H. F. Bayer, *Jesus' Prediction of Vindication and Resurrection* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986).

9. J. D. M. Derrett, "Law and Administration in the New Testament World," in Barton, *Biblical World*, vol. 2 (n1 above), pp. 75–89.

10. The Good Samaritan; the Labourers in the Vineyard; the Lost Drachma; the Tal-

ents/Pounds; the Two Debtors; the Unmerciful Servant. Note also the Treasure in the Field, the Purse (Luke12:33), the tribute money, the tetradrachm in the fish, the Prodigal Son, and the Pearl of Great Price.

11. Matt. 9:10–11. J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (EV; London: SCM, 1969, reprinted 1976), pp. 56, 124–25, 304.

12. Pali Tipitaka, Sutta-pitaka, and Majjhima-nikaya, *Sutta* 97, vol. 2, 194–95, trans. by I. B. Horner, *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings*, vol. 2 (London: Pali Text Society, 1957, reprinted 1975), pp. xxix–xxx, 377–78.

13. Derrett, *Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1977), pp. 183–200. Peter imitated Joshua's affair with Achan, but that is no excuse.

14. K. F. Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Paul's Strategy* (Naperville, IL: A. R. Allenson, 1966). If Paul was imitating the temple his model was as rapacious as any the world afforded.

15. Derrett, "Primitive Christianity as an Ascetic Movement," in V. L. Wimbush and R. Valantasis, ed., *Asceticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 88–107.

16. Ibid., pp. 96–97.

17. A nonsanctimonious observation hidden amongst conventional matter at N. Lash, "Easter Meaning," *Heythrop Journal* 25 (1984): 3–18, esp. p. 13.

18. See the whole of Juvenal's Sixth *Satire*, especially lines 219–23, which expose human nature (feminine) devoid of religion in our sense of that word.

19. Derrett, "Choosing the Lowest Seat: Luke 14:7–11," *Estudios Biblicos* 60, no. 2 (202): 137–68, esp. pp. 158–60.

20. Rom. 1:4; 6:5; 1 Cor. 15:20; Phil 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:3; Acts 4:2; 17:18; 23:6.

21. As with those resurrected by Ezekiel's "prophecy" at Ezek. 37:1–14 *ba emet masal* (in the truth lies a symbol): so Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 92b, Soncino Press translation, 618–19. The former bones sang (1 Sam. 2:6) and some went on to beget sons and daughters.

22. 1 Cor. 15:20, 23; Acts 26:23; Rom. 8:11; Col 1:18; Rev. 1:5. Pinchas Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Response* (London: SPCK, 1984) has no difficulty with this.

23. Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2–3; Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 10:1. G. F. Moore, *Judaism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), vol. 1, pp. 18, 86, 172; vol. 2, pp. 295, 317.

24. 2 Macc. 12:43–44; Acts 23:6; 24:15, 21. On Deut. 25:5 and Matt. 22:23–33 see C. Tresmontant, *Le Christ hebreu* (Paris: O.E.I.L., 1983), pp. 190–92 (the extensive usages of the Hebrew root *gum*, instructively comparing the vocabularies of Mark 5:41–42 and Matt. 9:27—to my eye Matthew has tendentiously emended Mark's straightforward statement, so that when she got up, she "was" raised [by Jesus]).

25. Luke 24:46; John 20:9; cf. Luke 16:31; John 11:25; Acts 10:41, 17:3; Luke 9:27. Rising must be logically prior to "being raised up." The (doubtful) dates of New Testament documents do not affect this. J. Kremer at *B.Z.*, new series, no. 23 (1979): 97–98. At Mark 9:27 the order of statements is reversed.

26. Compare Matt. 20:18e with Mark 10:34b (intransitive) and Luke 18:33b. Mark has been edited by Matthew; similarly Mark 8:31b has been edited at Matt. 16:21; Luke 9:22. Acts 2:24, 32, 3:36, 13:33–34 (God raised him up).

27. Justin *Dialogue* 105.4; 1 Sam. 28; Josephus *Jewish War* 7.185. G. Sontheimer, "God,

Dharma and Society . . . ," in *Indology and Law: Studies in Honour of Prof. J. D. M. Derrett*, ed. G. Sontheimer and P. K. Aithal (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1982), pp. 329–58, esp. p. 334.

28. W. L. Craig, "The Historicity of the Empty Tomb of Jesus," *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985): 39–67; also the same at *N.T.S.* 30 (1984): 273–81. Lucian ridicules the story in *Passing of Peregrinus* 40–41—*Lucian*, vol. 5, Loeb Classical Library, trans. A. M. Harmon (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), pp. 45–47. Lapide, *Resurrection of Jesus* (above n22) wastes no time on the "proofs."

29. Luke 24:13–35, 36–43; John 20:14–17, 19–28; Matt. 28:16–20; John 21:1–14; 1 Cor. 15:3–8, and the spurious Mark 16:14–18. J. E. Alsup, *The Post-Resurrection Appearance Stories of the Gospel Tradition* (London: SPCK; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1975).

30. See R. Carrier at n66 below, also Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 13b, ed. Isidore Epstein (Brooklyn: Soncino 1990), p. 69.

31. Derrett, *Anastasis*, pp. 60–62. F. Morison, *Who Moved the Stone?* (London: Century, 1958).

32. The classical stories of informative reporting by people returning from the dead (Seneca *Herc. Fur.* 731–69; Bede *History of the English Church and People* 5.12) are ridiculed by Callimachus in his comical "sepulchral epigram" in *Greek Anthology* 7.524 (Loeb Classical Library 2.282). On Er the Pamphylian see R. Bauckham, "The Rich Man and Lazarus . . ." *N.T.S.* 37, no. 2 (1991): 225–46, esp. pp. 237–38.

33. The Jewish law is succinctly explained at Maimonides, *Code*, bk. 14, trans. A. M. Hershman, *The Code of Maimonides, Book Fourteen. The Book of Judges* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1949), pt. 2: Ineligible witnesses: potential sinners, sinners and apostates: pars. 11–12 (pp. 105–10); relatives: pars. 13–14 (pp. 110–13); persons likely to benefit from testimony: pars. 15–16 (pp. 115–19). Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 5.4; Tosefta, *Sanhedrin* 3.4–5.

34. Derrett, *Anastasis*, pp. 42–44, 71, 117. *Sunday Telegraph* (London), March 17, 1996, p. 3; Aug. 27, 2000 (untitled letter to the editor).

35. *Daily Express*: Sept 12, 1985; BBC News, Nov. 12, 1986; *Sunday Telegraph*: Sept. 21, 1991; Jan, 7, 1996; March 8, 1998; Sept. 26, 1999; Nov. 12, 2000; Dec. 12, 2000; Mar. 11, 2001. An old case: R. Blyth, *Akenfield* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 330–31. The phenomenon was notorious in ancient times: Plutarch *Sera numinis vindicta* 22–33—*Plutarch's Moralia* 7.270–98; also the same, *Moralia* 563D. Aristides *Orations* 26.68–70. Samuel Butler, *The Fair Haven* (1873, repr., London: Fifield, 1913), pp. 214–17.

36. Derrett, *The Victim* (Shipston-on-Stour: Drinkwater, 1993), ch. 8. John 14:24–25; Ps. 22; Isa. 53; 1 Macc. 7:9, 14, 23, 36; 4 Macc. 18:66–69; Heb. 11:35.

37. J. Attali, *Les juifs, le monde, et l'argent* (Paris: Fayard, 2002). The author interviewed by E. Conan, "Les juifs, les chretiens et l'argent," *L'Express*, Jan. 10, 2002, pp. 57–65.

38. A. S. Martin, "Ascension," in J. Hastings, ed., *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh, UK: T & T Clark, 1906).

39. Sleeping in shrines or temples, one obtained oracles, especially cures of illnesses. R.L. Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1996), pp. 151–53.

40. Cf. Marcus Aurelius 10.36, Loeb Classical Library, ed. and trans. C. R. Haines (1930, repr., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 289. An elderly recruit to

the Order was glad the Buddha had died—he was free from his precepts! Sutta-pitaka, Dighanikaya 16.20 = 2.261, in *Dialogues of the Buddha*, part 2, trans. T. W. and C. A. F. Rhys Davids (London: Luzac, 1930), p. 184. A better attitude appears in Seneca *Letters* 11.8–10, *Seneca ad Lucilium epistulae morales*, vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library, trans. R. M. Gummere (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917), pp. 63–65.

41. H.-J. Klauck, *Herrenmahl und hellenistischer Kult* (1982): 76–89; W. Horbury, *N.T.S.* 44, no. 3 (1998): 444–69.

42. Martin, "Ascension," *D.C.G.* 1 (1906). Below, n44.

43. Peter, 55–56 places the Ascension immediately after the Resurrection, while Luke 24:51 reads as if there were only a day's interval. Acts 1:2–3 not only specifies "40 days" (i.e., a good space of time) but even indicates that Jesus is able to issue instructions during that period.

44. J. Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53* (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), p. 1225. Note Luke 9:31, 51; Eph 1:20, 4:10; Heb. 4:14, 6:19, 9:24; 1 Pet. 3:22; 1 Tim. 3:16g; and perhaps John 20:17.

45. An apologetic stance is taken by A. S. Martin, "Ascension." See 125, col. 2, on the purpose of the Ascension. Jesus has become God: J. B. Green, *Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 859–63, esp. p. 862. E. Haenchen, *Acts* (EV; Oxford: Blackwell, 1971, reprinted 1982), pp. 148–52.

46. Acts 1:9 is paralleled at Apollodorus 2.7, 7 (see J. G. Frazer's note in *Apollodorus*, vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library, p. 271n2). Tob. 12:18–21.

47. Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:27, 31, 37; 13:35–37; cf. Ps. 49:9. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:42, 50, 54. See next note.

48. Derrett, *Anastasis*, p. 77.

49. Josephus *Antiquities* 1.85 (Enoch); 3.96 and 4.326 (Moses). Lapide (n22 above) concurs in general, see pp. 46–49, 64, and for Ezek. 37, his pp. 51–52, 80–83, 135. On the specially holy see also S. Sandmel, *A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1957), pp. 28–29.

50. L. Ginzburg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968), pp. 5.95–96n671, 163; 7 (index), 360 (Paradise, entering alive).

51. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London: D.L.T., 1970), pp. 66–68, 95, 425n1. Add: Babylonian Talmud, *B.B.* 58a. He entered Paradise alive; Derek Eres Zuta 1.9 (end). Exod. 2:6. Ginzberg, *Legends*, pp. 1.297; 5.264n307.

52. Ginzberg, *Legends*, pp. 3.389; 6.138nn803–804. Num. 25:12–13. Derrett, *Law*, pp. 169, 189 (citing A. Spiro).

53. Ginzberg, *Legends*, pp. 4.30; 6.187n30.

54. Ibid., p. 5.96. "Late" means circa 300 CE or later compilations.

55. J. Leipoldt, "The Resurrection Stories," trans. Eric Weinberger, *Journal of Higher Criticism* 4, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 138–49; at *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 12 (1948): 737–42. Likewise Rev. 11:12.

56. D. W. Palmer, "The Literary Background of Acts 1:1–14," *New Testament Studies* 33, no. 3 (1987): 427–38, esp. p. 434 (a most valuable study). For another point of view see the

anthropologist-psychologist M. J. Field, *Angels and Ministers of Grace* (London: Longmans, 1971), pp. 115–16.

57. Philo *Life of Moses* 2.288–91; *Sacrifices* 8–10; Josephus *Ant.* 4.236. Sifre Devarim, *Sifre on Deuteronomy*, trans. R. Hammer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 381–82. Midrash Tannaim 224. Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 13b, Soncino Press trans., p. 72. Joshua saw him ascend: Ginzburg, *Legends*, pp. 3.473; 6.161n951, 164n952. Ascension of Moses (= Testament of Moses) 10.12; 11.5–8. J.H. Charlesworth, ed., *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 933. J. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 481–82.

58. Livy 1.16, vol. 1, trans. W. M. Roberts (London and New York: Dent, 1912), pp. 19–20. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 1.64, 4; 2.56, 2–7, Loeb Classical Library, trans. E. Cary, pp. 213, 473–74. See Palmer at n55 above.

59. Sculptures at Sanchi; in the Victoria and Albert Museum (London), and the British Museum (London); (information supplied by Dr. Michael Willis). On Jacob's Ladder: A. Farrer, *The End of Man* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1975), pp. 163–64, 166.

60. Acts 14:11–13. A first-century mime in *Select Papyri*, vol. 3, Loeb Classical Library, trans. D. L. Page, 1969), p. 289. Cf. 1 Sam. 20:18–19.

61. See n2 above.

62. Derrett, *Anastasis*, pp. 34–35, 81–82. Cf. M. M. Caspi and S. B. Cohen, *The Binding* [Akedah] *of Isaac and Its Transformation in Judaism and Islam* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Biblical Press, 1995).

63. Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 14a, Soncino Press trans., p. 72. See n56 above. Ginzburg, *Legends*, vol. 6, pp. 163–64.

64. Gen. 5:22, 24; Wisd. of Sol. 4:10–14; Sir. 44:16; 49:14; Heb. 11:5; 1 Clem. 9:2–3.

65. Spicq, *L'Epitre aux Hebreux*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gabalda, 1953), pp. 343–45. H. Odeberg at *Theologische Wörterbuch des Neues Testament*, 533–37.

66. J. J. Lowder, "Historical Evidence and the Empty Tomb Story: A Reply to William Lane Craig," in this volume; R. R. Carrier, "The Plausibility of Theft," in this volume.

67. J. Neusner, "How Judaism Reads the Bible," *J.H.C.* 8, no. 2 (2001): 210–50, esp. pp. 228n11, 250.

68. Ibid., p. 231.

12

BY THIS TIME HE STINKETH:

THE ATTEMPTS OF WILLIAM LANE CRAIG TO EXHUME JESUS

ROBERT M. PRICE

> He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all.
>
> —Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Have you ever wondered what it would be like if, somehow, so-called Scientific Creationism should come to dominate professional biology, anthropology, paleontology, and geology? It would be an unmitigated disaster, a nightmare, not because a particular hypothesis, unattractive to many of us, would have gained the upper hand, but rather because it would denote a major step backward in terms of scientific method. Indeed, it would mean the covert or overt control of science by dogma. This much is clear to anyone who is familiar with the axe-grinding character of Creationism's arguments, its laughably badly hidden agenda, and its completely deductive methodology. If we are to take seriously William Lane Craig's ubiquitous rhetorical appeals to consensus (a logical fallacy, last time I looked), we face an analogous situation today in the guild of supposedly critical New Testament scholarship.

For Dr. Craig would have us believe that the extreme skepticism that once

held biblical scholarship hostage to (what he calls) the naturalistic presuppositions of Deism has more recently given way to a general return to confidence in the substantial historical accuracy of the gospels, and especially in the historicity of the empty tomb and the physical resurrection of Jesus. Craig regards such a shift as something of an enlightenment. I doubt he would shun the word for all its historical associations; indeed, he and his cadre of latter-day apologists seem to enjoy gloatingly appropriating the style and accoutrements of the "critical" establishment they think themselves to have displaced. For instance, relishing the opportunity to turn the tables on John Dominic Crossan, Craig confesses himself "puzzled" as to "why a prominent scholar like Crossan would set his face against the consensus of scholarship."[1] Clearly he enjoys being part of the establishment Sanhedrin, now that, as he perceives, his own Pharisaic party, rather than the skeptical Sadducaic faction, controls it. Note, for instance, how Craig refers as a matter of course to his fellow evangelical apologists R. T. France and Robert Gundry simply as "New Testament critics." The hands may be the hands of Baur, but the voice is the voice of Warfield.

I suspect that, though Craig indulges in a bit of wishful thinking, playing taps for various critical approaches still quite far from death's door, he may well be correct that New Testament scholarship is more conservative than it once was. This has more than he admits to do with which denominations can afford to train the most students, hire more faculty, and send more members to the SBL. But basically, it should surprise no one that the great mainstream of biblical scholars hold views friendly to traditional Christianity, for the simple reason that most biblical scholars are and always have been believing Christians, even if not fundamentalists. It is only the pious arrogance of Craig's Evangelicalism (which denies the name "Christian" to anyone without a personal tête-à-tête with Jesus) that allows him to implicitly depict New Testament scholars as a bunch of newly chastened skeptics with their tails between their legs. Even Bultmann, a devout Lutheran, was much less skeptical than Baur and Strauss.

But is this trend to neoconservatism an enlightenment? Rather, I regard it as a prime example of what H. P. Lovecraft bemoaned as the modern failure of nerve in the face of scientific discovery: "Someday the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age."

APPEAL TO CONSENSUS OR APPEAL TO FALSE ANALOGY?

In response to a critic who objected to Craig's appeals to consensus, Craig wrote the following:

> Although, as Dr. Washington rightly says, "we should never believe in a position because somebody famous holds it," nevertheless, as Wesley Salmon points out,
>
> > "there are correct uses of authority [as] well as incorrect ones. It would be a sophomoric mistake to suppose that every appeal to authority is illegitimate, for the proper use of authority plays an indispensable role in the accumulation and application of knowledge" (Wesley C. Salmon, *Logic*, Foundations of Philosophy Series [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963], p. 63).
>
> Salmon goes on to explain that in order to count as evidence, the testimony must be from an honest and reliable authority on a matter in the person's field of expertise. "The appeal to a reliable authority is legitimate, for the testimony of a reliable authority is evidence for the conclusion" (Ibid., p. 64). Thus, while a Hollywood starlet's endorsement of a commercial product does not count as evidence, still the expert testimony of a DNA specialist concerning blood found at the scene of a crime does. When I quote recognized authorities like Hilbert, Page, Jeremias, and others concerning matters in their respective fields of expertise, this does count as expert testimony and, hence, evidence for the fact in question.[2]

It is telling that Craig wants to justify his use of the appeal to consensus. And in doing so, he appeals to a false analogy. In a court of Law, or in the certification of doctors, lawyers, and so on, we may have to go with the verdict of the majority since we have not the leisure to master the subject ourselves. This, in turn, is because we do not have all the time in the world before we must return a verdict, choose a surgeon, and so forth. We have to make a choice, and the voice of the consensus tips the balance. But it only seems to us that we must take the word of the experts in biblical discussions if we think that here, too, the decision is a matter of practical, even life-or-death choice, and this is not the case in an intellectual consideration of complex

issues. There, by contrast, we may and must take all the time in the world. But this appeal to consensus and authority reflects Craig's not-so-hidden agenda: he is winning souls, not arguing ideas. "You might get killed on the way home from the stadium tonight, and then you'd enter a Christless eternity! So be convinced of the historical resurrection here and now—get it settled tonight, won't you? If you came with a bus, they'll wait on you."

Besides, what is the poor layperson to do when authorities differ? Then one must either flip a coin (intellectually dishonest), take the easiest route of going along with one's predilections (also dishonest), or try to inform oneself to the degree that one can evaluate the authorities, and by then the appeal to consensus is out the window anyway. Craig is ostensibly trying to get the reader to consider the issues for himself, which is why he explains what he perceives to be the cogency of this or that argument. But it sticks out like a sore thumb when he falls back to the consensus ploy. And this he does at a crucial point: on the issue of who bears the burden of proof on highly controversial issues like whether someone came back from the dead. When he does this in his more summary apologetical presentations, appeal to consensus even harks back to medieval Catholic "implicit faith" which Calvin rightly ridiculed: you need not trouble your heads over this complicated theology. Just leave it to us experts.

Finally, let me point out once again that most New Testament scholars are Christian believers, whether of a conservative or liberal stripe. I don't mean they have to pretend to believe in the resurrection, or other miracles, because they know where their bread is buttered. No, I mean that they are functioning within a plausibility structure where the validity of the Christian faith is taken for granted, and the open questions are open only so wide. Even Bultmann and his disciples (all of whom are more conservative than he was) were self-consciously working as Protestant churchmen.

DOUBLE TRUTH OR HALF TRUTH?

I will turn to specific arguments below, but first, a look at two fundamental axioms of Craig's work is in order. The first is what strikes me as a kind of "Double Truth" model. The second is the old red herring attempt to evade the principle of analogy by means of the claim that critics reject miracle stories only

because they espouse philosophical naturalism. The second follows from the first. Both commit the fallacy of ad hominem argumentation even while projecting it onto the opponent. Let me note, I have no intention of discounting any of Craig's arguments in advance by trying to reveal their root. Rather, I shall take what seem to me the important ones each in their own right.

William Lane Craig is an employee of Campus Crusade for Christ. Thus it is no surprise that his is what is today euphemistically called "engaged scholarship." Dropping the euphemism, one might call him a PR man for Bill Bright and his various agendas. One thing one cannot expect from party hacks and spin doctors is that they should in any whit vary from their party line. When is the last time you heard a pitchman for some product admit that it might not be the best on the market? When have you heard a spokesman for a political candidate admit that his man might be in the wrong, might have wandered from the truth on this or that point? Do you ever expect to hear a Trekkie admit that the episode about the Galileo 7 was a stinker? Heaven and earth might pass away more easily. And still, there is just the outside chance that Craig might have become convinced through his long years of graduate study that Bill Bright has stumbled upon the inerrant truth, that needle in the haystack of competing worldviews and theories. But I doubt it. I think he has tipped his hand toward the end of the first chapter of his book *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, "Faith and Reason: How Do I Know Christianity is True?"[3] There he draws a distinction between knowing Christianity is true and showing it is true.

> What, then, should be our approach in apologetics? It should be something like this:
>
> My friend, I know Christianity is true because God's Spirit lives in me and assures me that it is true. And you can know it, too, because God is knocking at the door of your heart, telling you the same thing. If you are sincerely seeking God, then God will give you assurance that the gospel is true. Now, to try to show you it's true, I'll share with you some arguments and evidence that I really find convincing. But should my arguments seem weak and unconvincing to you, that's my fault, not God's. It only shows that I'm a poor apologist, not that the gospel is untrue. Whatever you think of my arguments, God still loves you and holds you accountable. I'll do my best to present good arguments to you. But ultimately you have to deal, not with arguments, but with God himself.[4]

A little further on he saith, "unbelief is at root a spiritual, not an intellectual, problem. Sometimes an unbeliever will throw up an intellectual smoke screen so that he can avoid personal, existential involvement with the gospel."[5]

Craig, then, freely admits his conviction arises from purely subjective factors, in no whit different from the teenage Mormon door knocker who tells you he knows the Book of Mormon was written by ancient Americans because he gets a warm, swelling feeling in his stomach when he asks God if it's true. Certain intellectual questions have to receive certain answers to be consistent with this revivalistic "heart-warming" experience, so Craig knows in advance that, e.g., Strauss and Bultmann must have been wrong. And, like the O. J. Simpson defense team, he will find a way to get from here to there. Craig would repudiate my analogy, but let no one who can read doubt from his words just quoted that, first, his enterprise is completely circular, since it is a subjectivity described arbitrarily in terms of Christian belief (Holy Spirit, etc.) that supposedly grounds Christian belief! And, second, Craig admits the circularity of it.

It almost seems Craig has embraced a variant of the Double Truth theory sometimes ascribed to Averroes, the Aristotelian Islamic philosopher, who showed how one thing might be true if one approached it by the canons of orthodox Islamic theology while something very different might prove true by means of independent philosophical reflection. Can it be that Craig is admitting he holds his faith on purely subjective grounds, but maintaining that he is lucky to discover that the facts, objectively considered, happen to bear out his faith? That, whereas theoretically his faith might not prove true to the facts, in actuality (whew!) it does?

I think he does mean something on this order. But what might first appear to be a double truth appears after all to be a half-truth, for it is obvious from the same quotes that he admits the arguments are ultimately beside the point. If an "unbeliever" doesn't see the cogency of Craig's brand of New Testament criticism (the same thing exactly as his apologetics), it can only be because he has some guilty secret to hide and doesn't want to repent and let Jesus run his life. If one sincerely seeks God, Craig's arguments will mysteriously start looking pretty good to him, like speaking in tongues as the infallible evidence of the infilling of the divine Spirit.

Craig's frank expression to his fellow would-be apologists/evangelists is revealing, more so no doubt than he intends: he tells you to say to the unbe-

liever that you find these arguments "really convincing," but how can Craig simply take this for granted unless, as I'm sure he does, he knows he is writing to people for whom the cogency of the arguments is a foregone conclusion since they are arguments in behalf of a position his readers are already committed to as an a priori party line?

His is a position that exalts existential decision above rational deliberation, quite ironic in view of his damning Bultmann's supposedly nefarious existentialism! Rational deliberation by itself is not good enough for Bill Craig and Bill Bright because it can never justify a quick decision such as Campus Crusade's booklet *The Four Spiritual Laws* solicits. I do not mean to make sport of Craig by saying this. No, it is important to see that, so to speak, every one of Craig's scholarly articles on the Resurrection implicitly ends with that little decision card for the reader to sign to invite Jesus into his heart as his personal savior. He is not trying to do disinterested historical or exegetical research. He is trying to get folks saved.

Why is this important? His characterization of people who do not accept his apologetical version of the historical Jesus as "unbelievers" who merely cast up smoke screens of insincere cavils functions as a mirror image of his own enterprise. His apparently self-effacing pose, "If my arguments fail to convince, then I must have done a poor job of explaining them" is just a polite way of saying, "You must not have understood me, stupid, or else you'd agree with me." His incredible claim that the same apologetics would sound better coming from somebody else (so why don't you go ahead and believe anyway?) just reveals the whole exercise to be a sham. Craig's apologetic has embraced insincerity as a structural principal. The arguments are offered cynically: "whatever it takes." If they don't work, take your pick between brimstone ("God holds you accountable") and treacle ("God still loves you").

IF MIRACLES ARE POSSIBLE, ARE LEGENDS IMPOSSIBLE?

Once one sees the circular character of Craig's enterprise, it begins to make a bit more sense that he would retreat to the old red herring of "naturalistic presuppositions" as a way of doing an end run around the most fundamental postulate of critical historiography. That is, Craig tells us that no one would

reject miraculous reports like the Resurrection narratives unless already dogmatically committed to Deism or atheism. Since it was in the vested interest of all those unregenerate sinners like Strauss and Schleiermacher to deny miracles, they had no choice but to deny that God had raised Jesus from the dead. Again, this is the most blatant kind of scurrilous mudslinging, no different from Creationist stump debater Duane Gish charging that "God-denying" evolutionists must want society to become a den of murderers and pornographers.

And it's also just nonsense, another tricky shell game on behalf of a higher Truth. I'm not saying Craig is wittingly distorting the truth to win his point. No, it's worse than that: he is so committed to a dogmatic party line that he cannot see "truth" as meaning anything but that party-line dogma. By definition, his gospel could never prove untrue because he has begun by defining it as the truth. In Craig's lexicon, you look up "truth" and it says "see 'gospel.'" To borrow Francis Schaeffer's terminology, for the apologist "truth" has become merely a "connotation word." As when liberal theologian Albrecht Ritschl said "Jesus has the value of God for us," Craig might say, "Christianity has the value of Truth for us." As for William James righteous endeavor was "the moral equivalent of war," for apologists Christianity is "the moral equivalent of truth." Only it doesn't work. For Ritchlianism, Jesus was in fact not God; for James, moral endeavor was in fact not war. Even so, anything that substitutes for the truth may be preferred to the truth, but then it is a lie.

And thus it is no wonder that apologists show themselves ready to use every rhetorical trick in the book, since all means are justified by the end of making new converts. Craig at one point needs the Johannine pseudocharacter of the Beloved Disciple to be a historical witness of the events, and, as a trump, he says, "If it be said that the evangelist simply invented the figure of the Beloved Disciple, then 21:24 becomes a deliberate falsehood."[6] But why should the notion of an apologist, in this case an ancient one, resorting to pious fraud surprise anyone? Indeed, after careful acquaintance with the works of evangelical apologists, it is precisely what we should expect.

If the charge that unbelievers are hiding behind a smoke screen is a mirror image of apologists' own strategy of using scholarly argument like smoke and mirrors, a charge I have cited Craig as pretty much admitting, then the "naturalistic presuppositions" business is a specific instance of such

childish "I know you are, but what am I?" tactics. Does it take a blanket presupposition for a historian to discount some miracle stories as legendary? No, because, as even Bultmann recognized, there is no problem accepting reports even of extraordinary things that we can still verify as occurring today, like faith healings and exorcisms. However you may wish to account for them, you can go to certain meetings and see scenes somewhat resembling those in the gospels. So it is by no means a matter of rejecting all miracle stories on principle. Biblical critics are not like the Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal. But a selective, piecemeal, and probabilistic acceptance of miracle stories is not what apologists want. They take umbrage that critics do not wind up accepting any and all biblical miracles. Otherwise how are we to understand the constant refrain, e.g., C. S. Lewis, that it is inconsistent for critics to strain out the gnat of the virgin birth while swallowing the Resurrection?

So if it would not require a blanket principle to *reject* the historicity of particular miracle stories, we must ask if it would take a blanket principle to require *acceptance* of all biblical miracle stories. Clearly it would. And that principle cannot be simple supernaturalism, openness to the possibility of miracles. One can believe God capable of anything without believing that he did everything anybody may say he did. One can believe in the possibility of miracles without believing that every reported miracle must in fact have happened. No, the contested principle is that of *biblical inerrancy*, the belief that all biblical narratives are historically accurate simply because they appear in the Bible. After all, it will not greatly upset Craig any more than it upset Warfield to deny the historical accuracy of medieval reports of miracles wrought by the Virgin Mary or by the sacramental wafer, much less stories of miracles wrought by Gautama Buddha or Apollonius of Tyana.

"Supernaturalism" is not at all the issue here. The issue is whether the historian is to abdicate his role as a sifter of evidence by accepting the dogma of inerrancy. Does fire become better fire when doused with water? That is what Craig wants, because he is trying to win souls for Bill Bright.

Nor is "naturalism" the issue when the historian employs the principle of analogy. As F. H. Bradley showed in *The Presuppositions of Critical History*, no historical inference is possible unless the historian assumes a basic analogy of past experience with present.[7] If we do not grant this, nothing will seem amiss in believing reports that A turned into a werewolf or that B changed

lead into gold. "Hey, just because we don't see it happening today doesn't prove it never did!" One could as easily accept the historicity of Jack and the Beanstalk on the same basis, as long as one's sole criterion of historical probability is "anything goes!"

If there are Buddhist legends or Pythagorean tales about people walking on water but there is no present-day instance, is the historian to be maligned as a narrow dogmatist and, worse, a moral coward refusing to repent, if he or she judges the report of Jesus walking on the water to be an edifying legend, too?

The historical axiom of analogy does not dogmatize; critical historians are not engaging in metaphysical epistemology as if they could hop into a time machine and pontificate "A didn't happen! B did!" Again, Craig and his brethren are just projecting. It is they, and not critical historians, who want to be able to point to sure results. Imagine the creed: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thy heart that God hath probably raised him from the dead, thou shalt most likely be saved." But who is the joke on here? Historians don't have creeds. They frame hypotheses. Sure, you can find some hidebound prof, some small-minded, insecure windbag who will not budge from a pet theory because he has too much personally invested in it. But you have no trouble recognizing such a person as a hack, a fake, a bad historian who ought to know better. The last thing you do is to emulate such behavior and make it into an operating principle. But apologists do. Again, it's projection.

It reduces to this: at the end of Bill Bright's *Four Spiritual Laws* booklet, there is a cartoon diagram showing a toy locomotive engine labeled "fact," pulling a freight car labeled "faith," followed in turn by a superfluous caboose tagged "feeling." The new convert is admonished to let faith rest on fact, not to allow faith to waver with feelings. But the outsider (not to mention the ex-insider) must suspect that it is the caboose that is pulling the train, and pulling it backward. Faith is based "firmly" upon feeling, and certain notions are postulated as "fact" because of the security they afford to the sick soul who seeks a port in the existential storm. Craig's own essay in the humbly titled online *Truth Journal*, "Contemporary Scholarship and the Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ" opens with the supposed predicament of "modern man," feeling all alone in a big bad universe.[8] "Against this background of the modern predicament, the traditional Christian hope of the resurrection takes on an even greater brightness and signif-

icance. It tells man he is no orphan after all. . . .' Can anyone imagine a genuine work of scholarly research opening with soap-operatic organ music of this kind? No, we find ourselves in a tent revival, even if it is on the mountainside of L'Abri.

LEST HIS DISCIPLES SAY, "HE HAS RISEN"

Craig has occasion, in his defense of the empty tomb story, to cross swords with John Dominic Crossan, as I have already noted. One need hardly subscribe to every thesis put forth by Crossan to appreciate that he is an innovative and creative New Testament scholar who marshals his vast learning in an attempt to find out new things from the gospels. Crossan is concerned to advance the state of knowledge. Contrast him with Craig, who uses his own formidable erudition in one vast damage-control operation. Every effort of Craig's is to squelch new theories that threaten to cast doubt on the traditional picture of the storybook Jesus and Christian origins. One feels that Craig would sooner put his efforts elsewhere than putting out fires lit by Bultmann, Strauss, and Crossan. If he had his way, he'd be occupied with something more edifying.

Evangelicals think they've got the truth in their back pocket, so they can't be trying to find what they think they've already got. They're just trying to attack everybody else. Novelty is the devil. They expend great time and effort mastering the skills of Greek and Hebrew exegesis (witness the unparalleled excellence of the Dallas Theological Seminary in these areas)—for what? You know how the story's going to end already! All their efforts at exegesis are the laborings of a mountain to bring forth a mouse. New ways to sling the same old hash. If one of them really comes up with something new theologically, it will result in immediate charges of heresy. The effort is solely to hold the fort against the advance of intellectual history. Evangelical biblical scholarship, like evangelical theology, is just a massive effort to arrest modernity. In precisely the same way, there simply is no Creation Science. It is all just an effort to poke as many holes in evolutionary biology as they can, as if fundamentalism will emerge the victor by default.

That vented, let's turn to the empty tomb story. As elsewhere, the apologist's task is one of harmonization of "apparent contradictions," this time

between the empty tomb stories of the gospels on the one hand and the list of resurrection appearances in 1 Corinthians 15 on the other. What's the problem? By the reckoning of most New Testament scholars, 1 Corinthians 15:3–11 preserves a list of appearances decades earlier than the writing of Mark's gospel. And it has nothing to say of the discovery of the empty tomb on Easter morning by Mary Magdalene and her sisters. From this, some draw the inference that the story of the empty tomb is a later addition and thus an unhistorical embellishment. Naturally Craig cannot have this, so he tries to coax from the text of 1 Corinthians what is not there: a Pauline citation of the empty tomb tradition. Before he is done he will be telling us how Paul must have gotten his information about the empty tomb from a visit he himself made there on a visit to Jerusalem! Presumably Craig derived this privileged information the same way Matthew got his "tradition" that the risen Jesus appeared to the women at the tomb, simply by reading it between the lines (in Matthew's case, the lines of Mark). In the end we actually find Craig saying, "Thus Paul's acceptance of the empty tomb is strong evidence in favor of its historicity"![9]

All Craig can actually show, and this much is certainly a point well taken, is that, since 1 Corinthians 15:4 does mention Jesus' burial as the darkness before the dawn of his resurrection, the notion of a vacant tomb would hardly have been alien to the writer's conception. It would be no surprise to find a mention of an empty tomb in this list, and its lack may simply be because the formulator of the list thought it too obvious to mention. True enough. Where I perceive Craig to be fudging the issue is in his assumption that the only alternative is to envision the formulator of the list believing, as modern liberal theologians do, in a resurrection of a type compatible with an occupied tomb. And if this be ruled out as anachronistic (I agree, it seems far-fetched), then, according to Craig, we are back to the gospel's empty tomb scenario. But are we?

Craig realizes that he needs to circumscribe the alternatives if he is to make it appear a simple either/or proposition. So he says there are no competing burial traditions. But there is at least one, namely the statement in Acts 13:28–29 that Jesus was buried by the same people who crucified him. In a case like this, one can easily imagine Jesus' disciples knowing (or surmising) that he had been buried, but not knowing where, or knowing it to be a common grave, e.g., the Valley of Hinnom where Jesus himself had

warned habitual adulterers and thieves not to end up, since only those not deemed fit for a decent burial were disposed of there (Mark 9:43–48). If the disciples then beheld him resurrected (or thought they did), there would have been no question of finding "his" tomb, whether empty or occupied. The same would be true if, as implied in John 19:42, 20:15 and the anti-resurrection polemic mentioned by Tertullian (*De Spectaculis* 30), some held that Jesus had been but temporarily interred in Joseph's mausoleum for reburial elsewhere after the Sabbath was past. "They have taken away my lord, and I know not where they have laid him." So it's not as if to assume an empty tomb is to presuppose the empty tomb story of the gospels, i.e., that of a known and vacated tomb one could point to, as Craig wants to do, as an item of evidence.

Here we reach two related issues of interest to Craig. First, trading on the idea of a known tomb that should have been occupied but wasn't, Craig hauls out the old argument that if the tomb had not been demonstrably empty the authorities could have silenced the apostles' preaching by the simple expedient of producing the body. "Here's your resurrected savior! Take a whiff!" But this is absurd: the only estimate the New Testament gives as to how long after Jesus' death the disciples went public with their preaching is a full fifty days later on Pentecost! After seven weeks, I submit, it would have been moot to produce the remains of Jesus. Does Craig picture the Sanhedrin using modern forensics? Identifying the rotting carcass of Jesus by dental records? In fact, one might even take the seven-week gap to denote that the disciples were shrewd enough to wait till such disconfirmation had become impossible.

Second, Craig appeals to the fact that there is no known tradition of Jesus' (occupied) grave being venerated as a site of holy pilgrimage. We might expect that there would be if the empty tomb tradition were later. Good point. But on the other hand, a moment's thought will reveal that once the empty tomb story eventually gained acceptance, the visitation of an occupied tomb would have been suppressed by Christian authorities, much as King Josiah shut down local shrines that functioned as rivals to Solomon's Temple. (Here and everywhere Craig simply presupposes a naive picture of the gospels as straightforward records of reporting, without tendential bias.)

The imagination of the apologist is essentially midrashic. It attempts to harmonize contradictions between texts by embellishing those texts,

rewriting them by rereading them. In this manner, for instance, the discrepant accounts of Peter's denials are "reconciled" by redrawing the scene as one in which Peter denies his lord not merely three but six, eight, or nine times, each evangelist "selecting" three of these for God knows what possible reason. Similarly, the Synoptics have Simon carry Jesus' cross, while John has Jesus himself carry it. No gospel has Jesus carry it for a while, then drop it, and Simon pick it up for him. Mark has both thieves mock Jesus; Luke has one mock him, the other defend him. No gospel has one thief stop mocking and start defending. These composite scenarios, which we see replayed every Easter in all the Jesus movies on TV, are the products of harmonizing midrash.

This midrashic imagination follows closely in the footsteps of ancient scribal midrash which, e.g., postulated Adam's first wife, the feminist hussy Lilith who left Adam to be replaced by the Stepford Wife Eve, all in order to harmonize Genesis One (simultaneous creation of woman and man) with Genesis Two (woman created after man). And from Deuteronomy's statement that no one knew Moses' burial place, something scarcely conceivable to the Moses-worshipping Torah reader, ancient scribes inferred that no tomb was known and visited because none existed! Moses must have been assumed bodily into heaven without dying like Elijah and Enoch! Craig is drawing the same midrashic inference in the case of Jesus: no known tomb veneration ⇒ no corpse!

Craig tries to make the Markan empty tomb tale a piece of sober, contemporary history. It is harder to say which part of his attempt is farther fetched. We are told that the story is unvarnished history since it betrays no signs of theological *Tendenz*. No theological coloring? In a story told to attest the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead? What else is it? Isn't it all varnish? Formica, instead of wood? Charles Talbert has no trouble adducing abundant parallels from Hellenistic hero biographies in which the assumptions into heaven of Romulus, Hercules, Empedocles, Apollonius (and let's not forget Elijah and Enoch) are inferred from the utter failure of searchers to find any vestige of their bones, bodies, or clothing.[10] Talbert concludes that a resurrection appearance, though not incompatible with such an "empty tomb" type episode, would by no means be needful. The ancient reader would know what Mark was driving at: God had raised the vanished Jesus from the dead. This is a prime bit of form criticism on the part of Talbert (no God-hating atheist, by the way, but a Southern Baptist, if it makes

any difference): it shows precisely that the form of the story is dictated by the theological function of the story. Contra Craig, it is theological through and through. Can anyone miss the irony that Craig, who values the story as nothing but a piece of apologetical fodder, can profess to see it as a bit of neutral history?

Craig thinks the story not only objective reporting but even headline news. He borrows from Rudolph Pesch the absurd notion that the very vagueness of the story lends it specificity! The pre-Markan passion story (assuming, as apologists like to do, that there was one) does not mention the name of "the high priest" as Caiaphas, and "This implies (nearly necessitates, according to Pesch) that Caiaphas was still the high priest when the pre-Markan passion story was being told, since then there would have been no need to mention his name."[11] The idea is that a historical reference to the past would have named the priest, just as a historian will refer to "King Henry VIII," not just to "the king." A check of any history book will make it clear what any reader knows already. Sometimes it's one way, sometimes another. It means nothing. Besides, Caiaphas' name may just as well be missing because the storyteller had only the vaguest idea of the circumstances and didn't know who was the high priest at the time. Craig's fondness for the empty tomb is of a piece with his predilection for empty arguments, such as Paul's mute witness to the empty tomb and the evidential value of a vague story.

The most astonishing assertion Craig makes regarding the empty tomb story of Mark is that concerning the silence of the women in Mark 16:8. "The silence of the women was surely meant to be just temporary, otherwise the account itself could not be part of the pre-Markan passion story."[12] Up to this point Craig has argued that the empty tomb story must have been a continuation of the pre-Markan passion, not a separate pericope, because it has so much thematic continuity with the preceding. And yet here a gross discontinuity is smoothed over in the name of the assumption that the tomb tale formed part of the pre-Markan passion.

Craig the apologist calls on his midrashic skills again, just as Matthew, Luke, and the author of the Markan Appendix (really, Appendices) did when they came to the same dead end, as it seemed to them. All alike simply ignored Mark's statement that the women disobeyed the young man's charge and had them inform the disciples, just as they were bidden. Craig ignores

it, too. He is a harmonizer. He cannot bring himself to entertain the thought that Mark might have wanted to say something quite different from his redactors. Before silencing Mark by making his silent women speak, we might ask after the implications of the strange and abrupt ending, and it is not far to seek. Isn't it obvious that the claim that the women "said nothing to anyone for they were afraid" functions to explain to the reader why nothing of this had been heard of before? In other words, it is a late tradition after all, and not just because 1 Corinthians 15 lacks it. No, read in its own right, it just sounds like a rationalization, cut from the same cloth as Mark 9:9, where we read that, what do you know, Elijah did come just as the scribes say he must have if Jesus is to be accepted as the messiah. So why didn't anyone know it? Uh . . . because he told them to keep quiet about it till later; yeah, that's the ticket.

Before leaving the empty tomb story, I cannot resist a comparison suggested by the story and the apologists' handling of it. In Matthew's highly embroidered version of Mark, he has the enemies of Jesus warn Pilate that, if given the chance, those tricky disciples of Jesus would steal his body and then claim he rose from the dead. Whether or not they did, and it is not impossible, I cannot help seeing an analogy to the self-styled disciples of Jesus like William Lane Craig whose tortuous attempts to establish an empty tomb and a risen Jesus do seem to smack of priestcraft and subterfuge.

NO SPIRIT HAS FLESH

Many New Testament scholars have observed that the conception of the resurrection body implied in 1 Corinthians 15 clashes so violently with that presupposed in the gospels that the latter must be dismissed as secondary embellishments, especially as 1 Corinthians predates the gospels. Craig takes exception. The whole trend of his argument seems to me to belie the point he is ostensibly trying to make, namely that any differences between the two traditions do not imply that 1 Corinthians allows only sightings, subjective visions, while the gospels depict more fulsome encounters replete with dialogue, gestures, touching, and eating. Nothing in 1 Corinthians 15 rules out such scenes, he says. But surely the very urgency of the matter shows that Craig would feel himself at a great loss if he had to cut loose all those juicy

gospel resurrection stories to be left with the skimpy list of terse notes in 1 Corinthians 15. By itself, 1 Corinthians 15 just wouldn't mean much. He wants the appearances of 1 Corinthians 15:3–11 to be read as if they had in parentheses after them "See Luke 24; Matthew 28; John 21."

Of course Craig is muchly mistaken in thinking that this clash between 1 Corinthians and the gospels is the main reason New Testament critics dismiss the gospel Easter narratives as unhistorical. There are many reasons, including the gross contradictions of detail between them (scarcely less serious than those between the nativity stories of Matthew and Luke), the clear evidence of redactional creation and embellishment, and so on. Suffice it to say Craig once again tries to oversimplify the problem, so that by solving the part of it he treats (if he does solve it), he can afford to ignore the rest of the problem.

Craig spends a lot of time in his essay "The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus" addressing details of 1 Corinthians 15 and the history of its interpretation in a reasonable and credible way.[13] I have no quarrel with his rejection of Bultmann's existentializing reading of σωμα as "selfhood," when it must mean body in a substantial sense. (But, ironically, we will see below that Craig is unwilling to let σαρξ mean simply "flesh"!) My problem comes when Craig starts trying to harmonize the flesh-versus-spirit contradiction between Luke 24:39 and 1 Corinthians 15:50. Put simply, both Luke and 1 Corinthians pose the alternative of "spirit versus flesh" as possible modes of the risen Jesus, but whereas Luke has Jesus say, "No spirit has flesh and bones as you see me having," 1 Corinthians says "Flesh and blood shall *not* inherit the kingdom of God" (15:50) and "the last Adam became a life-giving *spirit*" (15:45).

There are two major steps in his argument. First Craig must try to empty the term "spiritual body" (predicated of the risen Jesus) of any connotation suggesting a body composed of a luminous angelic substance, i.e., something wholly different from flesh. If this is what 1 Corinthians meant, it would indeed imply a rather different picture than that, e.g., of John 20:27, where Jesus, like LBJ, shows off livid scars. He focuses on the contrast between "psychical body" and "spiritual body," showing, quite properly, that the former ought to be taken as "natural body," not "physical body." Thus the contrast between "natural" and "spiritual" body would not in and of itself have to mean the latter is immaterial. True, I guess, but then what else would it mean? Craig

sounds like an old-time rationalist when he appeals to the "natural"/"spiritual" opposition back in 1 Corinthians 2:14–15, which seems to intend a moral comparison, to define the contrast in 1 Corinthians 15. He winds up with "spiritual body" meaning on the one hand "a body dominated, directed by the Holy Spirit," and on the other, tautologically equivalent to "a supernatural, i.e., a resurrected, body." But in either case, please, a physical body.

But can Paul have imagined that Jesus' body during his earthly life was not already dominated and directed by the Holy Spirit? Ours, maybe, but his? One cannot ignore the parallel being drawn between Jesus and the resurrected believer throughout the chapter. And to say that "it is raised a spiritual body" means only "it is raised" is a piece of harmonizing sleight of hand like that which would understand Mark 13:30 to mean "Whichever generation is alive at the time these things happen will see these things happen."

Craig makes an interesting observation once he gets to 1 Corinthians 15:47, "The first man is from the earth, of dust; the second man is from heaven." He notes: "There is something conspicuously missing in this parallel . . . the first Adam is from the earth, made of dust; the second Adam is from heaven, but made of—? Clearly Paul recoils from saying the second Adam is made of heavenly substance."[14] Is that so clear? When the point at issue is explicitly, "How are the dead raised? With what sort of body do they come?" I am not sure Paul means to recoil from the seemingly inevitable implication of what, after all, is his own parallel!

It seemingly does not occur to Craig to take seriously history-of-religions parallels (since, I'm sure, he would tell us that everyone in his circles finds them passé) such as Richard Reitzenstein adduced to paint a very plausible backdrop of Mystery Religion mysticism according to which initiation/baptism begins the formation of an inner δοξα body or πνυεμα body which will finally supplant the outworn physical/natural body in the hour of eschatological salvation. It's not like this is the only place where the conceptuality or the terminology occurs, and elsewhere it does seem to imply some kind of angelic body (reminiscent of the adamantine *vajra* body of Buddhist mysticism).

If he doesn't quite manage to evacuate "spiritual body" of its implied connotation of "body of spirit," Craig's attempt to deny that the word "flesh" (σαρχ) really means flesh is downright comical. Just as Bultmann wanted σομα to mean something other than "body" for the sake of his theology, Craig desperately wants σαρχ in 1 Corinthians 15:50 ("Flesh and blood shall

not inherit the kingdom of God") to mean something other than "flesh" for the sake of his apologetics. He wants Paul to have been talking about a resurrected Jesus with a body of flesh, just one no longer subject to death, like Superman, so he does not want 1 Corinthians 15:50 to mean that the risen Jesus lacked a body of flesh. So having turned spirit to flesh in the case of the spiritual body, he will now turn flesh into spirit.

How does Craig accomplish this exegetical alchemy? He cites various Old Testament passages which show how the phrase "flesh and blood" was often used as synecdoche (part for the whole) for "mortality." So when Paul says "flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God," he need mean no more than "mortality shall not inherit immortality," which, come to think of it, is exactly what he does say in the second half of the parallel: "neither shall the corruptible inherit the incorruptible." He need not mean, Craig wants us to believe, that a man with a body of flesh could not inherit the eternal kingdom.

Was Craig absent on the day they explained what synecdoche is? If you use a part to stand for the whole, then what's true of the whole must be true of the part. That's the whole point. If you cry, "All hands on deck!" You expect all crew members to be present in their entirety. Just because you don't mean they are to place only their hands on the deck, a la Kilroy, doesn't mean you exempt them from bringing their hands along with the rest of their anatomy! In other words, why would anyone ever use "flesh and blood" to stand for "mortality" in the first place unless he had in mind the obvious connection that flesh is always corruptible? We die because we are flesh, and flesh wears out, gets sick and dies, as Prince Siddhartha learned the hard way! "All flesh is grass," says Isaiah 40:6. Craig seems to think that since a metonym means more than the literal referent, it can as easily mean the very opposite of the literal referent. Or that the literal referent can be exempt from the very implication being drawn from it and for the sake of which it was invoked! It is simply absurd for Craig to suggest that one might say "flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God," meanwhile supposing that someone who had in fact inherited that kingdom did so while wearing a body of flesh!

Admittedly, the notion of a "spiritual body" is a tough nut to crack. I judge it a member of the same species of theological equivocation that includes the trinity and the hypostatic union of natures. It is an oxymoron, oil

and water held together by fiat, a pair of cheeks so that the enterprising theologian may turn the other whenever the one is smitten. It is Paul's all-purpose answer both to the Gnostics who scoff at a fleshly resurrection and to the literalists who dislike equally the prospect of disembodied "nakedness" (2 Cor. 5:4) and that of entering into life maimed (Mark 9:43). But that is ever the way with apologetics. It is the art and science of covering one's butt, or one's doctrine's butt. For one does not want to be found naked (2 Cor. 5:4).

SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES

We have reached the point where Craig asks us unconvinced unbelievers to blame him, not the unassailable truth of his position. One certainly cannot call Craig a poor workman who blames his tools. No, he says the tools are fine; it must be the workman that is to blame. But this, too, is a dodge. The problem is with the tools. Craig cannot do the job because they cannot do the job. The job, in fact, cannot be done. How can we, and how does he, "know" Christianity is true if he cannot "show" it is true? For Craig to ask us to accept such a faith would be like a vacuum salesman demonstrating his product in your living room; when the machine fails to suck up any dust, he asks you not to think ill of the vacuum; it's just that he, the salesman, can't get straight how to operate it properly. But he tells you that you ought to buy it anyway! You would be a fool to buy it, and the salesman would have shown that, whatever reason he has for selling the useless vacuum, it cannot be because he has any reason to think it a superior product. Maybe somebody's just paying him to sell it. Or maybe his dad sold the same vacuums, and he's inherited the brand loyalty.

NOTES

1. William Lane Craig, "Did Jesus Rise From the Dead?" in *Jesus Under Fire*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), pp. 141–76.

2. See "Dr. Craig's Opening Arguments," *The Craig-Washington Debate*, 1995, http://www.leaderu.com/offices/billcraig/docs/washdeba-craig1.html.

3. William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994).

4. Ibid., p. 48.

5. Ibid., pp. 49–50.

6. Craig, "The Empty Tomb," in *Gospel Perspectives II: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels*, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield, Eng.: JSOT Press, 1980), p. 188.

7. F. H. Bradley, *The Presuppositions of Critical History*, ed. Lionel Rubinoff (Ontario: Dons Mills, 1968).

8. Craig, "Contemporary Scholarship and the Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ," *Truth Journal*, 1995, http://www.leaderu.com/truth/1truth22 .html.

9. Craig, "The Empty Tomb," p. 190.

10. Charles H. Talbert, *What Is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

11. Craig, "The Empty Tomb," p. 191.

12. Ibid., p. 187.

13. Craig, "The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus, " in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels*, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield, Eng.: JSOT Press, 1980), pp. 47–74.

14. Ibid., p. 59.

13

PETER KREEFT AND RONALD TACELLI ON THE HALLUCINATION THEORY

KEITH PARSONS

Jesus' crucifixion marked the bitter end of a failed mission. He had come to Jerusalem full of messianic fervor and gripped by an apocalyptic vision.[1] Yet the predicted apocalypse did not occur. Instead, Jesus was seized by the authorities and, like a common criminal, was beaten, humiliated, and subjected to a painful and shameful death. His disciples, despondent and fearful for their own lives, scattered and hid, perhaps returning to their homes in Galilee. Then something extraordinary happened. The former followers of a failed and disgraced prophet became convinced that their executed leader had risen from the grave. Soon they were back in Jerusalem, fearlessly proclaiming Jesus' resurrection to all that would hear.

What happened? From the earliest days, the best argument for the historical veracity of the Resurrection has focused on these facts. What, other than the actual appearance of the risen Jesus to his disciples, could account for their radical transformation from terrified and dejected fugitives to evangelists and missionaries quite willing to risk their lives to preach their gospel? Obviously, the disciples were convinced that Jesus had risen. But is the actual resurrection of Jesus the best explanation for the fact that the disciples believed it? Skeptics have always had an alternative explanation, namely, that some of the disciples had experienced visions or hallucinations that convinced them that Jesus had

arisen. Recently, NT scholar Gerd Lüdemann offered extensive and cogent reasons for thinking that the postmortem "appearances" were in fact visionary.[2] For instance, the earliest kerygmatic proclamations, such as Paul's famous testimony in I Corinthians 15, made no distinction between "seeing" the risen Jesus with the physical eye or with the inner mental or spiritual "eye." The Greek word used to characterize these appearances is *ophthe,* the aorist passive form of the verb *horao,* which in this context means "appeared" in a sense that is neutral with respect to literal, visual appearance or appearance to the eye of the mind or spirit.[3] Paul uses this same verb in Colossians 2:18 to denigrate false visions. Apparently for Paul the important distinction was not between literal seeing and visionary seeing, both of which could be veridical. The important distinction was between true and false visions.

Yet, as Christians spread their message, they encountered opposition, first from the Jews and later from pagan gentiles. These enemies accused Christians of childish gullibility in spreading a ghost story. In response, Christian apologists, starting with the Gospel writers, emphasized that the postmortem appearances of Jesus had not been ghostly or visionary, but were literal visitations by a being with a physical, though miraculously transformed body. Christian apologists continue to rebut such charges today. This is especially important now since we know so much more than did the ancients about the circumstances that lead sane, intelligent people to believe things that never happened. For instance, during the 1970s and '80s the media were full of reports about people who claimed to have been abducted by extraterrestrials. The experiences were very vivid and lifelike, leaving the "abductees" convinced that something very real had happened to them. Nevertheless, all attempts to corroborate these stories with physical evidence or independent witnesses have failed.[4] Further, such experiences have recognized explanations in terms of anomalistic psychology.[5] Therefore, apologists must give solid evidence that the postmortem "appearances" of Jesus cannot be explained in similar ways. In particular, they need to explain why the stories about the risen Jesus cannot have been legendary elaborations of what were initially hallucinations or visions experienced by one or more of the disciples.

In their encyclopedic *Handbook of Christian Apologetics,* Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli offer thirteen reasons why the disciples' experience of the risen Jesus could not have been hallucinatory.[6] In this essay I present (in italics), their criticisms of the hallucination theory and continue with my responses.

(1) There were too many witnesses. Hallucinations are private, individual, subjective. Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene, to the Disciples minus Thomas, to the two Disciples at Emmaus, to the fishermen on the shore, to James (his "brother" or cousin), and even to five hundred people at once. . . . Even three different witnesses are enough for a kind of psychological trigonometry; over five hundred is about as public as you can wish. And Paul says in this passage {of 1 Cor. 15} (v. 6) that most of the five hundred are alive, inviting any reader to check the truth of the story . . . he could never have done this and gotten away with it, given the power, resources, and numbers of his enemies, if it were not true.[7]

Kreeft and Tacelli's argument here can be summarized as follows:

1. Hallucinations are private experiences of individual persons.
2. Most of the appearance accounts in the Gospels report that Jesus appeared among groups of two or more persons who had simultaneous experiences of him.
3. Therefore, most of the appearances reported in the gospels cannot have been hallucinatory.

The first premise makes a semantic point. Some authorities do define "hallucination" as an experience that is essentially private and subjective, and so not simultaneously shared with others.[8] Other writers do not hesitate to speak of collective or mass hallucinations.[9] If one insists that hallucinations be defined as private and subjective, so that by definition there could not be collective hallucinations, then we would simply need another term to characterize the very well-documented cases of mass sensory delusions. Since my purpose here is not to provide a taxonomy of sensory delusions, but only to contrast the delusory with the veridical, I shall define "hallucination" as follows: A hallucination is any percept-like experience, having the full force and impact of a real perception, whether experienced by an individual or by a group of individuals, that occurs in the absence of an appropriate external stimulus.[10] Thus, an individual entering a room who thinks he sees his recently deceased and buried mother sitting in a chair, or a crowd that "sees" a statue move when it has not moved, are instances of hallucination.

Defining hallucinations in this way creates a problem. Such a definition does not exclude visions, some of which are regarded as veridical by Christians. Thus, Reginald Fuller, a leading authority on the resurrection narratives, says

that the post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus should be regarded as "visions" rather than "hallucinations."[11] A hallucination may be silly or trivial, and the term always carries the connotation of delusion. A vision, while it may certainly involve auditory or visual elements, also conveys a profound sense of epiphany. Fuller could concede that, like a hallucination, a vision is a percept-like experience with no appropriate external stimulus, but he could still insist that a vision can be veridical because it conveys truths in the form of images communicated directly to the mind of the visionary by God.

Still, from the skeptic's viewpoint, the Christian's distinction between hallucinations and true visions is moot. Both involve instances of "seeing" or "hearing" when there was nothing physically present to be seen or heard. The skeptic's view of claimed visions or other purported private epiphanies is like Thomas Hobbes's riposte that when a man says that God spoke to him in a dream, we should conclude that he dreamt that God spoke to him. The skeptic cannot be answered by saying that the disciples experienced visions rather than hallucinations. Unless there is reason to think that Jesus was literally, physically present and was experienced by ordinary visual processes, the skeptic will rightly reject the postmortem appearance stories as delusions.

Getting back to Kreeft and Tacelli's argument, hallucinations as I have defined them are certainly not always private. As far back as 1852, when Charles Mackay published his classic study *Memoirs of Extraordinary Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*, it was known that people in crowds are often *more* susceptible to visual or auditory delusions than they are individually. Mass hallucinations and are extremely well-documented phenomena. In 1914, British newspapers were flooded with reports of the "Angels of Mons," supposedly seen in the sky leading the troops against the godless Huns. The "miraculous" manifestations of the Virgin Mary at Fatima, Portugal, were witnessed by thousands. The simultaneous public hallucinations by several witnesses at the Salem witch trials are too well known to require further comment.

Most importantly, *mass delusions may be directly witnessed as they occur.* When, a few years ago, a woman in Conyers, Georgia, began to claim regular visitations from the Virgin Mary, tens of thousands of the faithful would gather monthly to hear the banal "revelations." While the Virgin was allegedly making her disclosures many of those attending claimed to witness remarkable things, such as the sun spinning and dancing in the sky. A personal friend, Rebecca Long, president of the Georgia Skeptics, set up a tele-

scope with a solar filter, and demonstrated—to anyone that cared to look—that the sun was not spinning or dancing. Still, hundreds around her continued to claim that they were witnessing a miracle.

There are well-understood circumstances that make collective delusions more likely. Groups of people eagerly anticipating a miracle will very likely see one. People in such groups are highly suggestible and can be easily persuaded that they have seen, for instance, weeping icons or moving statues. Shared preconceptions and expectations, and the enormous power of communal reinforcement both during and after the events, easily account for the shared elements in the personal testimonies of individuals who have witnessed such "miracles." Rawcliffe explains it this way:

> Where a belief in miracles exists, evidence will always be forthcoming to confirm its existence. In the case of moving statues and paintings, the belief produces the hallucination and the hallucination confirms the belief. The same factors which operate for a single individual in the induction of hallucinations or pseudo-hallucinations, may become even more effective in an excited or expectant crowd, and on occasion may result in mass hallucinations. This is not to say that any two people are capable of having precisely the same hallucination identical in every respect. But similar preconceptions and expectations can undoubtedly result in hallucinatory visions so alike that subsequent comparisons would not disclose any major discrepancy. . . . Accounts of comparatively dissimilar hallucinatory experiences often attain a spurious similarity by a process of harmonisation in subsequent recollection and conversation.[12]

If, therefore, for whatever reason, a strong expectation arose not too long after Jesus' death that he would be seen again, then it would not be surprising at all if several groups claimed to have seen him. The postmortem "sightings" of Jesus are no more remarkable than the similar reports about Elvis Presley or Jimmy Hoffa.

The second premise of Kreeft and Tacelli's argument assumes that the Gospel reports of the appearances before groups of disciples are trustworthy. Since they place great emphasis on the reported appearance before 500 at once, let us examine this case. Neither the Gospels nor Acts specifically mention an appearance to 500, as they certainly would have if their authors had known about it. Their silence makes the story deeply doubtful. On the other

hand, some scholars think that Paul's story of the "500" refers to the events of the day of Pentecost described in the second chapter of Acts.[13] If so, Paul does not strengthen his case by adducing this "appearance" since, as Richard Carrier points out,[14] the strange events recounted in Acts do not include a physical manifestation of the risen Jesus.

As for Paul's statement that many of the 500 were still alive, and so their testimony could be checked, this claim was made in the first letter to the Corinthians. How many of the Corinthian Christians, probably mostly persons of rather modest circumstances, would have had the means or the disposition to travel from Greece to Palestine to track down the witnesses? It is easy to forget that for most people, traveling long distances was a very major undertaking in those days. Did Paul know the names and addresses of any of the "500"? Though he says he knows that some are still alive, he names none of them and gives no indication that he knows how to contact any of them. In fact, Paul was making a pretty safe claim.

Kreeft and Tacelli, like almost all apologists, repeatedly beg the question by assuming the 100 percent truth of biblical reports. There is no reason whatsoever to think that every claimed appearance of Jesus actually took place.[15] The original text of Mark, the earliest Gospel, contained hints of anticipated appearances but no appearance narratives at all. This fact indicates that the detailed appearance narratives were inventions of the later Gospel writers who were elaborating on stories that were originally vague and devoid of detail. Further, the numerous inconsistencies in the appearance stories in the later Gospels render them highly untrustworthy. G. A. Wells summarizes these inconsistencies:

> Matthew, following hints by Mark, sites in Galilee the one appearance to them that he records: the risen one has instructed the women at the empty tomb to tell the Disciples to go to Galilee in order to see him (28:10). They do this, and his appearance to them there concludes the gospel. In Luke, however, he appears to them on Easter day in Jerusalem and nearby on the Emmaus road (eighty miles from Galilee) and tells them to stay in the city "until ye be clothed with power from on high" (24:49). (Acts 2:1–4 represents this as happening on Pentecost, some fifty days later.) They obey, and were "continually in the temple" (24:53). Luke has very pointedly changed what is said in Mark so as to site these appearances in the city.[16]

It is therefore perfectly reasonable for skeptics to regard *all* the appearance stories as legendary accretions, but if we do concede that some of the disciples experienced an "appearance," there is no reason they could not have been hallucinations or visions.

(2) The witnesses were qualified. They were simple, honest, moral people, who had firsthand knowledge of the facts.[17]

The Gospels do not depict the disciples as simple, honest, and moral. It would be far more accurate to say they were portrayed as unbelieving, disloyal, and astonishingly obtuse.[18] Jesus frequently rails against their incomprehension and lack of faith. They are depicted by Mark as so dense that they witness miraculous feedings of five thousand in chapter six and four thousand in chapter eight, and are scolded by Jesus because they are still worrying (verses 14–21) about how to get bread to feed the multitudes! When Jesus was arrested, the disciples decided that discretion was the better part of valor. In short, they denied him or ran into hiding. According to the Gospels, only the women followers had enough courage to attempt to honor the body of Jesus.

Supposing that the disciples were decent, honest people, why does this make them unsusceptible to hallucinations? Decent, honest people have been having delusions and hallucinations for thousands of years, and interpreting those experiences as real. It is not at all unlikely that several of the disciples experienced vivid postmortem visions of Jesus and that this was the basis of the appearance stories (more on this below).

Likewise, the disciples were witnesses of the career of Jesus, but we have none of their eyewitness reports. What we have are, at best, second-, third-, or fourthhand reports of those experiences as recounted in the Gospels. There is no reason to think that the Gospel records are particularly reliable. On the contrary, how much confidence can we have in documents (1) written by persons unknown—with the possible exception of Luke, who admits he was not an eyewitness (Luke 1:1–2), (2) composed forty or more years after the events they purport to describe, (3) based on oral traditions, and therefore subject to all the frailties of human memory, (4) containing many undeniably fictional elements, (5) each with a clear theological bias and apologetic agenda, (6) contradicting many known facts, (7) inconsistent with each other, (8) with very little corroboration from non-Christian sources, and (9) testifying to occurrences which, in any other context, would be regarded as unlikely in the extreme?[19]

In short, the Gospels are frank and undisguised propaganda ("these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God"—John 20:31) that give us hand-me-down stories purporting to relate the experiences of the disciples. The appearance narratives are not the simple, unembellished reports of eyewitnesses, but carefully crafted literary products. Therefore, what really needs to be assured is not merely the honesty of the disciples, but the reliability of the whole process of telling and retelling, and again retelling, which started with eyewitness experiences and ended with the Gospel narratives.

(3) The five hundred saw Christ together, at the same time and place. This is even more remarkable than five hundred private "hallucinations" at different times and places of the same Jesus. Five hundred separate Elvis sightings may be dismissed, but if five hundred simple fishermen in Maine saw, touched and talked with him at once, in the same town, that would be a different matter.[20]

If five hundred Maine fishermen claimed to have seen, touched, and talked to Elvis, I would say they had been fooled by one pretty darn good Elvis impersonator. Wouldn't you? But Paul does not tell us enough even to justify hypothesizing an imposter. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that there was a gathering of 500 "brethren" somewhere not long after Jesus' crucifixion and that they thought they saw someone that they identified as Jesus. Even conceding this much leaves many questions unanswered. As noted earlier, the word for "appeared" used by Paul is ambiguous with respect to physical or visionary "seeing." So, given only what Paul says, it is unclear whether he means that the crowd saw an actual, physical person or whether they had a collective vision. Presuming that Paul means to assert that they saw an actual person, he unfortunately omits all the crucial details that would make his claim believable. Paul says nothing about them touching or talking to Jesus. How did Jesus supposedly appear to this crowd so that they would all recognize him? Was he on a hilltop or a stage? Did he say or do anything to authenticate his identity? Did each person in the crowd know Jesus personally, so they could reliably identify him? Did each person get close enough for a good look? Unfortunately, Paul is silent on these issues, yet they are absolutely vital for the evaluation of his claim. He just does not tell us enough about the "appearance" to draw any conclusions about its trustworthiness.

(4) Hallucinations usually last a few seconds or minutes; rarely hours. This one hung around for forty days (Acts 1:3).[21]

There is no reason to think that the risen Jesus was literally physically present for a continuous forty-day period. The "forty day" motif is repeated in both the OT and the NT: It rained for forty days and nights in Noah's flood, Moses was on the mountain forty days and nights, Jesus went into the desert for forty days, and so on. The author of Acts was using the "forty day" formula to indicate that for a limited time after Jesus' crucifixion he "presented himself" to a number of the apostles. Presumably, the "proofs" mentioned in Acts refer back to the postmortem appearances recounted in Luke 24. Yet the appearances in Luke seem to all take place on Easter day itself, that night, and perhaps the next day. So, the Luke/Acts author himself is not clear on just how long the risen Jesus hung around.

(5) Hallucinations usually happen only once, except to the insane. This one returned many times, to ordinary people.[22]

This claim is backed by no references to the psychological literature on hallucinations. How do Kreeft and Tacelli know that normal people do not get more than one hallucination, especially when they are undergoing enormously stressful or onerous circumstances? In fact, the article "Hallucinations" in the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Psychology,* says that 1/8 to 2/3 of the *normal* population experiences waking hallucinations.[23] Causes of hallucinations in normal persons include social isolation, rejection, and severe reactive depression. The disciples were very likely to be experiencing a strong sense of rejection, isolation, and depression after the execution of Jesus. Further, it is very common for the bereaved to experience visual or auditory hallucinations of their deceased loved ones. It is therefore not at all unlikely that more than one of the disciples experienced vivid hallucinations of Jesus.

In their authoritative study of hallucination, Peter D. Slade and Richard P. Bentall reinforce the above points. They cite numerous studies that, though their sampling methods are criticized, consistently support the claim that hallucinations are not necessarily pathological.[24] They conclude that "There can be no doubt that hallucinations occur to a limited extent in individuals who are not otherwise mentally ill."[25] Slade and Bentall conclude also that hallucinations are related to nonpathological mental phenomena and can be understood only by a deeper understanding of normal cognitive processes.[26] Further, they delineate a number of factors that affect the occurrence of hallucinations.[27] These include the experience of psychological stress:

> There is at least some evidence suggesting that particular kinds of stress may elicit hallucinatory experiences. The clearest example of this concerns hallucinations following bereavement. . . . [I]n a study of recently widowed men and women, [it was] estimated that no less than 13.3 percent of the sample had experienced hallucinations of the deceased spouse's voice. Other authors have noted the occurrence of visual hallucinations associated with grief in the elderly. . . . The finding of a relationship between hallucination and grief has been replicated across cultures . . . among the Hopi Indians of North America nonpsychotic people often hallucinate the presence of a recently deceased family member. . . . Other examples of hallucination have been noted in association with life-threatening or potentially life threatening situations.[28]

The Disciples were suffering from grief and shock at the death and humiliation of Jesus, at the very moment when they expected his apocalyptic elevation. They were also in mortal terror over their own fates; they could see firsthand the grisly fate that awaited them if they fell into the clutches of the authorities. Therefore, it just is not unlikely that one or more of them would have experienced vivid hallucinations of Jesus.

(6) Hallucinations come from within, from what we already know, at least unconsciously. This one said and did a surprising and unexpected thing . . . like a real person and unlike a dream.[29]

This is an odd objection since it seems to be most people's experience that dreams contain many surprising and unexpected things. In fact, hallucinations influenced many of the surprising and unexpected turns in history:

> Caesar is said to have taken orders from "voices" to invade countries. Drusus was said to have been deterred from crossing the Elbe by the sudden appearance of a woman of supernatural size. Atilla's march on Rome was checked by the vision of an old man in priest's raiment, who threatened his life with a drawn sword . . . Constantine fought a battle in the year 312 because of hallucinations and was converted to Christianity by "voices" . . . Mohammed had auditory and visual hallucinations . . . which were used by him in his calling as a prophet . . . the Christian emperor Charlemagne was thought to be directly inspired by the angels. . . .[30]

(7) Not only did the Disciples not expect this, they didn't even believe it at first—neither Peter, nor the women, nor Thomas, nor the eleven. They thought he was a ghost; he had to eat something to prove he was not.[31]

As noted above, by the time the Gospels were written, they had to address the anti-Christian polemics of their enemies. The Jews charged that the Christians were telling a ghost story when they talked about the resurrected Jesus. Also, some Christians had come to doubt the resurrection of the body, as Paul's polemic, beginning at 1 Corinthians 15:35, indicates. In response, the Gospel writers made up the stories about the risen Jesus eating and being touched by Thomas, so indicating the physicality of his resurrection. Enemies also accused Christians of gullibility, so they reacted by depicting the disciples as initially skeptical of the empty tomb reports. It is a very common rhetorical device used by True Believers in anything (UFOs, monsters, the occult) to claim that they started out as skeptics and were convinced by "overwhelming evidence." Of course, it always turns out that they were not really all that skeptical to begin with, or they were very uncritical in their evaluation of the "evidence."

By the way, it is very odd that the Gospels depict the disciples as skeptical of the Resurrection. After all, the disciples had supposedly seen Jesus raise others from the dead, walk on water, turn water into wine, cast out demons, cure the sick, the lame, and the blind, feed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, and appear in glistening raiment with Moses and Elijah while a divine voice boomed "This is my beloved son. . . ." By this time it should have been clear even to the dullest disciple that Jesus was a supernatural being possessed of awesome miraculous powers. After all that it would surely be a pretty simple trick to come back from the dead. So, something is out of place here. Either the disciples, clueless as they were, could not have been so skeptical of the Resurrection, or they had not witnessed the miracles they allegedly did. Either way, the credibility of the Gospels is undermined.

Most crucially, Kreeft and Tacelli here beg the question by assuming that a powerful vision experienced by one or more disciples could not have overcome the initial skepticism. According to Fuller, due to the ineffable nature of the experiences, the early community asserted that God had raised Jesus but did not tell appearance stories.[32] The appearance stories entered the tradition when later Christians tried to express in earthly terms what was originally indescribable.[33]

(8) Hallucinations do not eat. The resurrected Christ did, on at least two occasions.

(9) The Disciples touched him.

(10) They also spoke with him, and he spoke back. Figments of your imagination do not hold profound, extended conversations with you, unless you have the kind of mental disorder that isolates you.[34]

Again, one looks in vain for references to the psychological literature that document the claim that sane people cannot hallucinate someone touching them or dining or conversing with them. Further, the people who had these experiences, the disciples, wrote nothing so far as we know. These strange experiences, whatever they were, were recorded years later, shaped by the creative and imaginative processes of individual and collective memory, and then incorporated into self-conscious literary narratives (the Gospels).

The earliest appearance account, Paul's testimony in 1 Corinthians, is a bare formula, a kerygmatic assertion wholly lacking in detail. Only much later, with the writing of Matthew and Luke, do we find fleshed-out appearance narratives with details of time, place, and circumstance. In their worked-out Gospel forms, these stories are tailored to address the doubts and polemics of non-Christians of the late first century. Again, for Paul and the earliest Christians, it was not important to distinguish between a visionary and a physical encounter with the risen Christ. Only later, in response to anti-Christian polemics, did it become important to emphasize that the appearances were physical and not visionary. Clearly, the appearance stories grew in the telling, and the telling may well have obscured their original nature.

Further, as Robert M. Price asks:

> Where in the Gospels or in Acts do we read "profound, extended conversations" between the risen Jesus and his Disciples? Granted, Luke tells us there were such conversations, but what he actually has Jesus say for the benefit of the reader is quite short and is laden with Lukan vocabulary and theology, amounting to little more than scenes from the upcoming Book of Acts. We must wait for the Gnostic resurrection dialogues such as the *Pistis Sophia* and the *Dialogue of the Savior* if we want to read something similar to what Kreeft and Tacelli attribute to the resurrected Jesus.[35]

(11) The apostles could not have believed in the "hallucination" if Jesus' corpse had still been in the tomb. This is a very simple and telling point; for if it was a hallucination, where was the corpse? They would have checked for it; if it was there, they would not have believed.[36]

The logic of this argument seems a bit hard to grasp. I shall set it out semiformally as I understand it:

1. If the appearances were visionary or hallucinatory, Jesus' body would still have been in the tomb (premise).
2. If the body had still been in the tomb, the disciples would have seen it there (premise).
3. If the disciples had seen the body in the tomb, they would not have believed that Jesus had risen (premise).
4. The disciples did believe that Jesus had risen (premise).
5. The disciples did not see the body in the tomb (from 3 and 4, by *modus tollens*).
6. The body was not still in the tomb (2 and 5, by *modus tollens*).
7. Therefore, the appearances were not visionary or hallucinatory (1 and 6, by *modus tollens*).

The first premise assumes that Jesus' body was placed in an identifiable tomb. Although several contributors to this volume hold that Jesus was given an honorable burial in an identifiable tomb,[37] I am skeptical for several reasons. The honorable burial of a crucified person was possible; bodies were sometimes released to relatives as an act of mercy,[38] but such clemency was rare. The usual Roman practice was to leave rotting corpses on the crosses both to serve as a warning and because leaving the body unburied was the ultimate degradation inflicted on the victim of crucifixion. However, Acts 13:29 indicates that the same persons who had asked Pilate to crucify Jesus—presumably representatives of the Sanhedrin—took him from the cross and laid him in a tomb. Some scholars regard this account in Acts as an older and more reliable story than the Gospel burial narratives.[39]

If representatives of the Sanhedrin did bury Jesus, their motivation can hardly have been charity; rabble-rousing blasphemers and troublemakers deserved no such consideration. The burial was very likely done so that the Sabbath would not be polluted by the public exposure of a corpse (as forbidden by Deut. 21:22–23). If Jesus was thus hastily buried by his enemies, it seems very unlikely that they would have placed him in a respectable tomb. It seems more likely that he and those executed with him were unceremoniously dumped into a common grave.

The Gospel narratives give many hints that the burial of Jesus was dishonorable and that this was a source of shame for the early Christian community. The Gospels tell a charming story about Joseph of Arimathea and how he gave Jesus' body a decent burial. However, this story contradicts the tradition, preserved in Mark and Luke, of women going to the tomb on the Easter morning for the purpose of anointing the corpse. This story *presupposes* that the body had been dishonorably buried, i.e., without the proper rites and ceremonies. Had Joseph of Arimathea buried the body honorably in accordance with Jewish custom—as the Gospel burial pericopes imply, and as John states outright in 19:40—there would have been no reason for the women to undertake a dangerous task that could implicate them as followers of a seditious troublemaker.

In fact, we can watch the Joseph of Arimathea legend as it grows in the gospels. In Mark (15:43), the earliest source, he is just a "respected member of the Council, a man who looked forward to the kingdom of God." In Luke (23: 51) he is described as "a member of the Council, a good, upright man, who had dissented from their policy and the action they had taken." In Matthew (27: 57) he has become "a man of means, . . . [who] had himself become a disciple of Jesus." In John (19: 38) he is described as "a disciple of Jesus, but a secret disciple for fear of the Jews. . . ." Thus, in the Gospels, Joseph goes from a good and pious Jew, to one who actively dissented from the Sanhedrin's policy, to an actual follower of Jesus, to a secret disciple. Clearly, we have a growing legend, one that can be explained by the early Christians' embarrassment at the failure of the disciples to properly care for Jesus' body. Further, it is not necessary that Joseph of Arimathea himself was a complete fabrication. Legends often name actual historical persons. The legends surrounding the 1947 "saucer crash" at Roswell, New Mexico, name many actual historical persons.

In addition, as Gerd Lüdemann notes, the burial itself is represented in increasingly positive tones in the Gospels:

> Whereas Mark merely says that it was a rock tomb, the parallels not only presuppose this but also know that it was Joseph's own tomb (Matt. 27:60). . . . John (20.15) and Gospel of Peter 6.24 even locate it in the garden, which is a distinction. . . . Finally, Matthew (27.60), Luke (23.53) and John (19:41) describe the tomb as new; this is a mark of honour for Jesus and also excludes the possibility that Jesus was put, for example, in a criminal's grave.[40]

Finally, there is no record that the earliest Christians honored the site of Jesus' tomb. If they had known the place where the Resurrection supposedly had occurred, surely they would have venerated the site. For all these reasons, it seems to me that the Gospel writers have created an elaborate legend of Jesus' honorable burial to mitigate early Christians' shame at what was probably the dishonorable fate of Jesus' corpse.

On the other hand, if we do suppose that Jesus' body *was* placed in a known tomb, by the time the disciples would have checked, and we do not know when that would have been, any number of things could have happened to the corpse. Maybe Joseph of Arimathea had second thoughts about placing the body of an executed miscreant in his own tomb. So, as soon as the Sabbath was over at sundown on Saturday, he sent servants to remove Jesus' body to another site. Any number of such scenarios can be generated to account for the missing body.[41]

The second premise assumes that the disciples knew where Jesus was buried, but this is doubtful. The disciples ran into hiding with Jesus' arrest. If they *thought* they knew where Jesus was buried, they had to depend on the reports of one or more women who supposedly saw the burial site from a long way off (the women watched "from afar" says Mark 15:40). That report might not have been reliable for any number of reasons. The second premise also assumes that the disciples would have checked for the body had they known the site. Even this is not clear. Grave desecration was a serious crime, and the disciples were in plenty of trouble already.

It is essential not to project onto the disciples the mindset of a modern critical historian. Whatever state of mind the disciples were in following the "appearance" experiences, it certainly was not a spirit of critical, much less skeptical, inquiry. The ineffable quality and psychologically overwhelming nature of these experiences would have left little room for doubt and no motivation for rigorous investigation. There was only one task: to go forth and proclaim the Good News of the Risen Christ. Rigorous empirical scrutiny is the last thing on the mind of one in the grip of a powerful vision.

(12) If the apostles had hallucinated and then spread their hallucinogenic {sic} story, the Jews would have stopped it by producing the body.[42]

After Jesus' crucifixion, the disciples absconded, possibly all the way back to Galilee. If any remained in Jerusalem, they went underground. How long they remained in hiding is anybody's guess. Eventually, emboldened by

the "appearances," whatever they were, the disciples returned to the streets and the Temple, proclaiming the risen Christ. There would have been a further time lapse before anyone in power was sufficiently irritated by their preaching to go to the trouble of looking for the body.[43] By this time, even if only a few months after the crucifixion, the body of Jesus, even if the Jewish authorities could recover it, would have been in an advanced state of decay.[44] Had the authorities produced the badly decomposed body of a crucified man, the disciples would simply have denied that it was Jesus'.

(13) A hallucination would explain only the postresurrection appearances; it would not explain the empty tomb, the rolled-away stone, or the inability to produce the corpse. No theory can explain all these data except a real resurrection.[45]

Only real ETs in real extraterrestrial spacecraft would explain all the claimed phenomena associated with UFOs. Strange lights in the sky, vivid abduction experiences, cattle mutilations, and hosts of other weird phenomena are most economically explained by postulating real flying saucers piloted by real aliens. Otherwise, separate accounts would have to be given for each of these things, and this would be a less simple explanation.

In fact, just about everything Kreeft and Tacelli have said about the "appearances" of Jesus could be said about the various "close encounters" with ETs. Large numbers of people, far more than 500, have witnessed UFOs on given occasions. People "abducted" by aliens reported that their captors did all sorts of things we don't normally think of hallucinations as doing. Maybe hallucinations don't usually eat or converse, but neither do they insert anal probes or levitate people through the air. The ETs are often reported to materialize through solid walls, just like the resurrected Jesus. Many of the people who have had "close encounters" claim not to have wanted or expected such experiences. Many were former UFO skeptics. "Contactees" are usually simple, honest, moral (and sane) persons who have nothing to gain by reporting these phenomena. Further, Kreeft and Tacelli try to saddle the skeptic with the burden of explaining every detail of every appearance story (the stone rolled away, etc.) in terms of hallucinations. There is no reason the skeptic should accept such a burden for the simple reason that skeptics do not have to accept the appearance stories as 100 percent accurate. Apologists are constantly assuming as "data" what skeptics rightly regard as hearsay.

I conclude that the thirteen objections that Kreeft and Tacelli offer against the hallucination theory are devoid of cogency. Neither individually

nor collectively do they undermine the claim that the postmortem "appearances" of Jesus are best regarded as hallucinatory or visionary.[46]

NOTES

1. A number of scholars, whom I greatly respect, such as John Dominic Crossan, have recently denied the apocalyptic element in Jesus' teaching. For instance, Crossan views him as an itinerant philosopher, in the tradition of Diogenes the Cynic, who tells his followers to renounce possessions and live as mendicants. See John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991). Though I regard Crossan as one of the most acute of current NT scholars, I think this claim is extremely implausible. The apocalyptic nature of Jesus' teachings is strongly emphasized in the Gospels. By the time the Gospels were written, the delay of Jesus' return in glory must have already been an embarrassment to the church, requiring "spin doctoring" already evident in the Gospels. However, the tradition attributing such words to Jesus must have been so strong and well known that the Gospel authors could not afford to leave them out. A well-written, popular presentation of the evidence that Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet is found in B. D. Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

2. Gerd Lüdemann, *What Really Happened to Jesus: A Historical Approach to the Resurrection* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995).

3. Reginald H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), p. 30.

4. P. J. Klass, *UFO Abductions: A Dangerous Game,* updated ed. (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1989).

5. R. A. Baker, "The Aliens Among Us: Hypnotic Regression Revisited," *Skeptical Inquirer* 12, no. 2 (1987): 147–62.

6. Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994).

7. Ibid., pp. 186–87.

8. E.g., P. D. Slade and R. P. Bentall, *Sensory Deception: A Scientific Analysis of Hallucination.* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), p. 16.

9. E.g., D. H. Rawcliffe, *Illusions and Delusions of the Supernatural and the Occult* (New York: Dover, 1959), p. 111.

10. Modified from Slade and Bentall, *Sensory Deception*, p. 23.

11. Reginald H. Fuller, "The Resurrection," in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Metzger and Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 648.

12. Rawclife, *Illusions and Delusions*, p. 113.

13. Lüdemann, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, p. 95.

14. Private communication.

15. See section 8.4 of Richard Carrier's essay in this volume, "The Spiritual Body of Christ and the Legend of the Empty Tomb."

16. G. A. Wells, *The Jesus Legend* (Chicago: Open Court, 1996), p. 100.

17. Kreeft and Tacelli, *Handbook*, p. 187.

18. In Mark 8:32 Jesus calls Peter "Satan" because Peter took exception to some of his prophecies. Matthew 16:23 repeats this incident. In Mark 9:17–19 Jesus is told that his disciples could not cast out an evil spirit and he exclaims, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?" Matthew 17:17 tells the same story and repeats Jesus' imprecation. In Matthew 14:31 Jesus rebukes Peter for his lack of faith because Peter cannot walk on the water as Jesus does.

19. Each of these nine claims is old hat for higher critical students of the New Testament. On the unknown authorship of the Gospels, consult the articles on each Gospel in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Metzger and Coogan. On the dates of the Gospels see the introductions to each Gospel in H. G. May and B. M. Metzger, ed., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). On the unreliability of oral traditions see Crossan's very thorough discussion in John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998), pp. 54–67. On the fictional nature of the Gospel narratives see Randel Helms, *Gospel Fictions* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988). On the theological bias and apologetic intent of the Gospels see H. C. Kee, F. W. Young, and K. Froelich, *Understanding the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1965), pp. 55, 252–53. On the conflicts between the Gospel stories and recognized historical facts see Michael Arnheim, *Is Christianity True?* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1984), pp. 10–11. On the inconsistency of the Gospels with each other see Kee, Young, and Froelich, *Understanding the New Testament*, p. 59 and Wells, *The Jesus Legend*, pp 100–101. On the lack of independent support of the Gospel claims see Michael Martin, *The Case Against Christianity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), p. 86 and G. A. Wells, *Who Was Jesus?* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1989), p. 20. As for the tales that would be incredible in any other context we need only mention the Gadarene (or Gerasene) swine, (Matt. 8: 28–32; Mark 5: 1–13), the withering of the fig tree (Matt. 21: 18–20), and the feeding of 5000 (or 4000) (Mark 6: 35–44, 8: 1–9).

20. Kreeft and Tacelli, *Handbook*, p. 187.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. H. V. Hall, "Hallucinations," in *The Encyclopedia of Psychology*, 2nd ed., ed. R. J. Corsini (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1994), pp. 101–102.

24. Slade and Bentall, *Sensory Deception*, pp. 68–76.

25. Ibid., p. 81.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., pp. 82–109.

28. Ibid., p. 88.

29. Ibid., p. 187.

30. F. H. Johnson, *The Anatomy of Hallucinations* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1978), pp. 12–13.

31. Kreeft and Tacelli, *Handbook*, p. 187.
32. Fuller, *The Formation*, p. 648.
33. Ibid.
34. Kreeft and Tacelli, *Handbook*, p. 187.
35. Personal communication.
36. Kreeft and Tacelli, *Handbook*, pp. 187–88.
37. See the essays by Carrier, Lowder, and Kirby.
38. John Dominic Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?* (San Francisco: Harper, 1995), p. 167.
39. E.g., Fuller, *The Formation*, and Lüdemann, *What Really Happened to Jesus*.
40. Lüdemann, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, p. 21.
41. See the relevant chapters in this volume by Carrier and Lowder.
42. Kreeft and Tacelli, *Handbook*, p. 188.
43. Again it is important to remember that to the Jewish and Roman authorities, Jesus and his followers were probably no different from any number of fanatics, prophets, and messiahs from the hinterlands that periodically came into Jerusalem to make trouble. The Romans probably did not care what superstitious nonsense was preached in the streets of Jerusalem, so long as it did not disturb the peace or interfere with the collection of taxes. The Jewish authorities would have ignored the disciples until they got a large enough following to become a problem. Then, instead of seeking to score debating points by producing a decayed body, they probably would simply have persecuted the new sect—as Acts says they did.
44. See section 1.8 of Lowder's chapter in the present volume.
45. Kreeft and Tacelli, *Handbook*, p. 188.
46. I would like to thank Richard Carrier for his extensive and very helpful comments on the draft of this paper. I was very happy to defer to his superior expertise on a number of these issues. Unfortunately, space and time considerations kept me from incorporporating some of his suggestions. Also, I disagreed with a few of his recommendations and, perhaps foolishly, stuck witth my own original views in a couple of places.

14

SWINBURNE ON THE RESURRECTION

MICHAEL MARTIN

INTRODUCTION

Richard Swinburne is one of the most important contemporary Christian philosophers and perhaps the most prolific one.[1] In *The Concept of Miracle* (1971); his trilogy, *The Coherence of Theism* (1977), *The Existence of God* (1979), *Faith and Reason* (1981); and his tetralogy, *Responsibility and Atonement* (1989), *Revelation: From Metaphor to Analogy* (1992), *The Christian God* (1994), and *Providence and the Problem of Evil* (1998), he has defended various aspects of the Christian faith. He has also published a more popular book, *Is There a God?* (1996) and a book on epistemology, *Epistemic Justification* (2001).[2]

One distinctive aspect of Swinburne's philosophy of religion is the use of probabilistic reasoning in justifying his conclusions. Indeed, he has written a book on confirmation theory[3] and draws on that work extensively in his volumes on religion. This reliance on probabilistic reasoning is evident in Swinburne's latest book, *The Resurrection of God Incarnate*.[4] In this book, he concludes that it is overwhelmingly probable that Jesus was God Incarnate and was resurrected from the dead.

Swinburne's argument for the Resurrection is based on confirmation

theory—in particular Bayes's Theorem—and on what he considers rather modest background assumptions that he defended in his earlier work. Among these latter are the assumptions that God's existence is as probable as not and that, given his existence, God's Incarnation and Resurrection is as probable as not.[5] Swinburne maintains that these assumptions combined with the failure of alternative explanations, certain epistemological principles, and historical evidence yield the near-certain conclusion that Jesus is the Resurrected Incarnated God. The evidence he has in mind is Jesus' "perfect" moral life, Jesus' post-Resurrection appearances, and the empty tomb. By alternative explanations, Swinburne means explanations such as hallucinations or fraud. He assumes the epistemological principle—what he calls the principle of testimony—that "other things being equal we should believe what others tell us that they have done or perceived—in the absence of counter-evidence."[6]

THE PROBABILITY OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Swinburne makes clear that it is important to address the question of the probability of God and how likely it is that God would intervene in considering the probability of the Resurrection.[7] Without making modest background assumptions about the probability of God and the Incarnation, the historical evidence might not make the Resurrection probable. There are good reasons, however, for rejecting Swinburne's background assumption that God exists:[8] his concept of God is incoherent, the theistic explanations he puts forward conflict with our background knowledge, his reliance on the criterion of simplicity is problematic, his solution to the problem of evil is dubious, and his account of miracles is seriously flawed. Indeed, although Swinburne's background assumption that the existence of God is as probable as not, may be modest by theistic standards, it is not modest enough.

There are at least three conceptual problems with Swinburne's view of God. One is that God cannot know anything about the future and consequently cannot know if anything is morally right or wrong. Another is that God's being disembodied conflicts with his being all-knowing. And finally, God's being all-knowing conflicts with his being morally perfect.

According to Swinburne, although God is all-knowing, it is logically

impossible for him to know what human beings will freely do. Unfortunately, this view of God's all-knowingness both limits God's knowledge far more than Swinburne acknowledges and creates problems about the moral nature of God.[9] Not only can God not know what human beings will freely do, he cannot know what he himself will do. This means that God cannot know whether any physical event will take place, since he always has the option of intervening in the workings of natural law. Consequently, he cannot know now whether *any* particular event will occur in the future.[10]

In addition, there is another problem. Given any moral theory that takes the future consequences of a decision at least *partly* into account, it is difficult to see how God could know if his past decisions were moral. Since he cannot know anything about the future he cannot know if his past actions were morally correct, for their correctness would depend (at least in part) on what happens in the very distant future. No matter how good an action seems up to time t_1, new consequences after t_1 can change the assessment. It is difficult, then, to see how Swinburne can continue to think of God as morally perfect. As I have argued elsewhere, a morally perfect being is not just a being that never does anything wrong. A morally perfect being's action must be based on the being's knowledge.[11] So Swinburne's God is not morally perfect let alone all-knowing, unless he adopts an extreme deontological moral theory. Swinburne gives us no reason, however, to suppose that he embraces such a theory.

In addition, Swinburne's assumption of God's disembodiedness conflicts with his assumption of God's all-knowingness.[12] If God is disembodied, he does not know, for example, how to swim since only embodied beings have such knowledge. God's moral perfection also conflicts with his all-knowingness, for, to be all-knowing, God would have to possess, for example, knowledge by acquaintance of the pleasure a sadist derives from torturing children. In order to be all good, however, God cannot have this knowledge.

Theists purport to explain the origin of the universe and of human life. According to Swinburne, theistic explanations are a type of personal explanation: they are causal explanations in terms of desires and beliefs. Moreover, personal explanations, Swinburne says, are evaluated by criteria such as their compatibility with our background knowledge and their simplicity. However, Swinburne maintains that in the case of theism and other total theories, the criterion of compatibility with our background knowledge is not appli-

cable. Since total theories include everything, there is no background theory for them to be compatible or incompatible with, hence the only relevant criterion is simplicity. However, Swinburne is mistaken. Theism is less probable than not, given commonsense and scientific theories that explain the empirical world. Theism postulates a being that transcends this world, and one can ask whether the hypothesis that this being exists and has certain attributes is compatible with these background theories.[13]

Considered in this way, theistic personal explanations seem improbable in terms of our background theories. Although personal explanations are familiar and natural in ordinary life, we know that a person's brain and nervous system mediate the way that person's beliefs and desires bring about some physical event. For example, when one raises a cup to one's lips in order to quench one's thirst, one knows that this event is not brought about directly by one's desires and beliefs but occurs only because of a complex physiological causal relation between those desires and beliefs and the action of raising the cup. In the case of God, there is no such relation. According to Swinburne, the relation between God's desires and beliefs and a physical event such as the creation of the universe is direct and unmediated. Given our background knowledge of how personal explanations work in ordinary life, theistic personal explanations in terms of God's beliefs and desires seem improbable. All the evidence indicates that desires and beliefs cannot directly cause physical events.

According to Swinburne, a personal explanation in terms of a theistic God is simpler than an inanimate explanation or than other personal explanations in terms of polytheism or a finite God. Two questions need to be asked about this contention, however. Is a theistic personal explanation simpler than its rivals? Should the simplest explanation be preferred?

One obstacle to justifying the claim that theism is simpler than its rivals is the prima facie incoherence of theism. An incoherent theory cannot be simple since an incoherent theory entails any proposition, including a proposition expressing a theory of infinite complexity. The reason is this: If theory T entails P and ~P, then T entails any proposition Q. This point aside, whether or not the simplest theory should be preferred depends on factors other than simplicity.[14] For example, a theory T_1 may be simpler than T_2 but T_1 may be less desirable than T_2 on other grounds. Supposing theism is to be preferred, other things being equal, there is no reason to suppose they are

equal. As already noted, theistic personal explanations in the light of our background knowledge of the relation between mind and the physical brain are improbable. But even if other things are equal, why should the simplest explanation be preferred? Should it be preferred for pragmatic reasons, for example, because simpler theories are more convenient to use or for epistemic reasons, for example, because simpler hypotheses are a priori more probable? As I have argued elsewhere, however, the thesis that simpler theories are always a priori more likely is dubious.[15] On the other hand, the pragmatic criterion is irrelevant to Swinburne's purposes. Moreover, if one accepts that the simpler theory is a priori more likely, one wonders why naturalism would not be more likely than theism since it seems simpler than theism.

As we have seen, Swinburne maintains that theism should be judged in terms of its explanatory power. Let us consider two test cases of this power: evil and miracles. Does Swinburne's theism provide an adequate explanation of these phenomena? Any adequate explanation of evil must give an account of both moral and natural evil. With respect to moral evil, Swinburne uses the Free Will Defense (FWD): there is moral evil because of human misuse of free will. Numerous criticisms of this defense have been given, many of which Swinburne makes no attempt to answer.[16] Moreover, when he does attempt an answer it is often implausible. For example, the FWD presupposes that human beings have contracausal freedom, that is, that human choice is not fully determined by the operation of the brain. Swinburne's reply to those who say that scientific evidence seems to indicate that human choice is so determined is that "quite obviously the brain is not an ordinary material object, since—unlike ordinary physical objects—it gives rise to souls and their mental lives. Hence, we would not necessarily expect it to be governed by the normal laws of physics which concern ordinary material objects."[17] Now perhaps Swinburne is correct but in the light of present neurological evidence is there any reason to suppose that the brain is not governed by normal laws of physics? Moreover, what sort of neurological evidence could there possibly be that would show that it is not?

Swinburne also suggests that quantum theory provides a way of reconciling human free will and brain science. His reasoning here is hard to follow, but the general drift of his argument seems to be that unpredictable random micro events in the brain allow for free will. There are two problems with this idea, however. First, Swinburne admits that unpredictability at the

micro level "normally" does not result in unpredictability at the macro level although "it can do so."[18] But supposing that *some* micro random events in the brain do lead to unpredictable human decisions, this admission does not take us very far in understanding human free will. There are literally billions of human free choices that are made every second. For Swinburne's quantum theory solution to be adequate we would have to suppose that there are trillions of macro undetermined human decisions occurring every day. There is no reason to suppose that this is true. Second, if human free choice is brought about by random micro events in the brain, then human free choice itself would seem to be a random event. Human beings cannot be held responsible for choices brought about by a random process. Yet Swinburne wants to hold them responsible.

Swinburne's solution to the problem of *natural* evil is that it is necessary to have knowledge of how to bring about evil and prevent its occurrence if agents are to make moral choices and become responsible for their own development. There are many problems with this position that he makes no effort to address or else addresses inadequately.[19] His solution to the problem of animal suffering brought about by natural events falls into the latter category. According to Swinburne, animal suffering is necessary for the animals' own good. The activities that make their lives worthwhile—facing danger, saving each other from predators, feeding their young—also bring about suffering. However, if animals do not have free choice, something Swinburne admits, why is it good for them to suffer? It does not improve their characters or provide opportunities for them to exercise moral choice. I see nothing good in itself about facing danger or suffering. To be sure, these could have beneficial effects, for instance, an animal's learning to survive. But an all-powerful God could bring about these effects without danger and without suffering.

In any case, Swinburne accepts the usual justification for the existence of moral and natural evil: a world with evil and free will is better than a world with less evil but no free will. He also admits, however, that an all-good God could create a world without pain and suffering, that is heaven and, according to Christianity, has done so. Yet heaven, he says, is without those goods that suffering makes possible. Does he think that heaven is therefore not as good as our world? To suppose so would indeed be paradoxical. Surely, theism assumes that heaven is a better world than this one. Moreover, it is a world *with* free will, one whose denizens *are* responsible for their actions.

Thus, Swinburne's admission of the existence of heaven seems to undermine his explanation of moral and natural evil.

Another test case for the explanatory power of theism is miracles.[20] Is Swinburne's account of them adequate? On his view, the justification for believing that a miracle has occurred rests not only on our background knowledge but also on particular historical evidence. Furthermore, our background knowledge leads us to believe that, although God will not often intervene in the natural order, he will do so on occasion. Particular historical evidence, Swinburne maintains, shows that miracles have occurred. He cites contemporary miracle cures as well as biblical miracles such as the Resurrection to support his contention.

Even from a theistic point of view, the admitted rarity of miracles indicates that the initial probability of any particular event being a miracle is very low. Consequently, very good historical evidence, indeed, is needed to overcome this problem. But this evidence is lacking.[21] The Resurrection, as we shall see, is no exception to this rule: the claim of the Resurrection is initially improbable and in order to establish that Jesus arose from the dead very strong evidence is needed.[22]

THE PROBABILITY OF THE INCARNATION AND RESURRECTION OF GOD

Swinburne estimates that if God exists, then it is as probable as not that God would be incarnated, die, and be resurrected. But this estimate is too high. According to Swinburne, God wants us to form our own character and to help others do the same. This is why he gave us free will.[23] Swinburne maintains that God's becoming incarnate, dying, and being resurrected would assist us in using our free will to make the right choices. In his view there are three basic ways the Incarnation and Resurrection would help: it would help us atone for our sins, it would enable God to identify with our suffering, and it would show us and teach us how to live.

There are many theories of the Atonement; Swinburne adopts the "satisfaction theory" of Anselm. To offer God his due, according to Anselm, is to follow his will. However, when God's creatures sin this is precisely what they do not do. The sins of God's creatures insult God and detract from his honor.

There is, then, an obligation to restore God's honor and to undo the insult. This is satisfaction. According to Swinburne, we humans are not in a very good position to atone properly for sins. We need help. God provides this help by offering a perfect human life as reparation, a life led by God himself. Only the sacrifice of God himself, that is God Incarnate, would be adequate reparation.

There are many serious problems with this theory that I have discussed elsewhere.[24] Here I will mention three of them. First, it is not clear why the Incarnation and Resurrection as a means of atonement would be a good thing for God to do. Swinburne admits that one alternative is "for God to insist on our making considerable atonement ourselves and then forgiving us in the light of this,"[25] but he rejects this alternative because it would make obtaining divine forgiveness "very difficult for most of us."[26] Given Swinburne's stress on the exercise of free will, however, it is hard to see why this would be a problem. Working out one's own salvation, hard as it might be, surely would build more character than bringing it about through Jesus' death and resurrection.[27]

Second, it is not clear why the death of the God-Man is the best means of providing satisfaction of a wrong against God's honor. Why would not some other punishment be preferable? If God's honor is infinitely wounded by human sin, why could it not be appeased more effectively by the eternal punishment of Jesus? Why the death penalty? It would seem more commensurate with the sin committed against God to inflict suffering on Jesus for eternity than to kill him after only relatively little suffering. Even if one argues that death has a harshness that no pain can match, it is important to recall that Jesus was dead for only a short time. It would have been a punishment more commensurate with human sin if Jesus had remained dead. Third, one must wonder why it took God so long to offer atonement via the sacrifice of his Son. Humans had been sinning for tens of thousands of years before the Incarnation.

Swinburne also argues that the Incarnation enables God to share in the suffering of humanity. Again there are problems. First, why did this sharing come so late? For tens of thousands of years God did not share in this suffering. It is important to note that Swinburne argues that there is only one Incarnation—none before or since the Incarnation in first-century Palestine. Why did God decide to share only two thousand years ago? Second, why did God have to die and be resurrected to experience human suffering? If Jesus

had been tortured, but not killed, he would have shared in human suffering and no resurrection would have been necessary.

Swinburne's last reason for God's Incarnation and Resurrection is that it shows human beings what a perfect life is like, providing paradigm examples of moral goodness. This, according to Swinburne, is necessary to supplement the propositional moral revelation given to human beings.[28] But is it? First, the propositional moral revelation can be supplemented by the example of lives of excellent but less than perfect moral teachers such as Buddha, Confucius, and various saints. Why is perfection necessary for paradigm examples of moral goodness? Second, it seems logically possible for moral teachers to lead perfect moral lives without being God Incarnate. Third, it is possible for God Incarnate not to be executed. I see no reason to accept Swinburne's view that a perfect moral life "must end in death, plausibly the hard death of execution."[29]

In the light of these problems it seems overly optimistic to suppose that, given the existence of God, God becoming Incarnate and being Resurrected is as probable as not.

THE PROBABILITY OF JESUS BEING THE INCARNATE GOD

Relative to the assumption that there is or will be an Incarnate God, how probable is the evidence used to support the thesis that Jesus is in fact the Resurrected God Incarnate? Not very probable. Indeed, Swinburne himself believes that the probability is only one-tenth (p. 212). But even this figure seems overly optimistic.

First, according to Swinburne, Jesus as the Incarnated God was supposed to lead a perfect life. I have elsewhere cited some of Jesus' teachings and behavior that are hardly perfect,[30] but Swinburne dismisses these as either historically inaccurate or as, on reflection, perfect after all.[31] Suggesting that we ought not to judge Jesus' action by ordinary human moral standards,[32] he argues that Jesus can perform actions that according to these standards would be immoral and still lead a morally perfect life. Thus, for example, Swinburne considers whether Jesus can be said to have lived a morally perfect life despite the harsh punishment he inflicts on the wicked in the afterlife. Downplaying the traditional view that such punishment will be eternal, he

defends Jesus' action as morally justified. However, he admits, "anyone not sympathetic [with my argument] will have reason to believe that Jesus was not God Incarnate."[33] Interestingly he completely ignores what seems to me the hardest case to explain away of apparent moral imperfections: Jesus' tacit approval of slavery.[34]

Second, Swinburne argues that Jesus taught the atonement; that is, he taught that through his death and resurrection human beings are saved. But, as I have argued elsewhere,[35] at times Jesus argues that one is saved by following a strict moral code and at other times he maintains that one is saved by making great sacrifice in following Jesus. These teachings are difficult to reconcile with the Atonement view. In any case, Swinburne does not attempt to do so.

Third, Jesus was completely wrong that he would return within the lifetime of the followers.[36] His inaccuracy is more probable on the assumption that he was not God Incarnate than on the assumption that he was.

THE PROBABILITY OF THE EVIDENCE GIVEN THE BACKGROUND ASSUMPTIONS

What is the probability of evidence for the Resurrection given the background assumptions? Elsewhere I have addressed this in detail. Here I will discuss just two of the relevant factors that lower the probability of the evidence for the Resurrection story given the background assumptions.[37]

First, we lack independent confirmation of the Resurrection both from Jewish and pagan sources.[38] Moreover, other parts of the New Testament fail to support the details of the Resurrection story. The genuine Pauline epistles, not to mention the earlier non-Pauline letters, provide no details about the death, burial, and Resurrection of Jesus.

Second, as we have seen, Swinburne holds the principle of testimony that, other things being equal, we should believe what others tell us that they have done or perceived in the absence of counterevidence.[39] But we often do have such counterevidence. In the light of well-known evidence from psychological experiments, we know that eyewitness testimony is often unreliable. Eyewitness testimony is influenced by what psychologists call "postevent" and "preevent" information. In the case of Christianity, for post-

event information we can read "early Christian beliefs" and for preevent information we can read "prior messianic expectations." Moreover, we know from other religious movements such as the messianism of Sabbatai Sevi that eyewitnesses in such movements tend to be unreliable.[40] Why should we expect the situation to be different in the case of Christianity?

THE PROBABILITY OF EVIDENCE ON ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

Suppose God was neither incarnated nor resurrected. Then the evidence such as the empty tomb, and the post-Resurrection appearances might be explained by hypotheses that postulated that witnesses were experiencing hallucinations, or that some person or persons were perpetrating a fraud. According to Swinburne, these alternative explanations make this evidence highly improbable. Indeed, he estimates that, given the falsehood of the Resurrection and Incarnation and background assumptions such as that God exists, the probability of evidence such as the empty tomb and the post-Resurrection appearances would be one in one thousand.[41]

To be sure, Swinburne argues that this evidence would become more probable if these explanations were elaborated on in detailed ways. But in that case, Swinburne maintains, the alternative accounts would be complex and thus a priori improbable. On the other hand, Swinburne argues that the traditional account of the Resurrection is relatively simple. Let us suppose alternative explanations are *not* elaborated on. If Swinburne's other estimates seem too optimistic, one in one thousand seems too pessimistic. If they are elaborated on they certainly are too pessimistic. However, is Swinburne correct that the traditional account is simpler and thus a priori more likely than elaborated alternative accounts? His point assumes, however, what I have challenged above: the simpler theory is always a priori the most probable. Moreover, as I argued above, simplicity is not the only consideration in theory choice. In addition, it is dubious that the traditional account can account for the evidence without elaboration of details that adds to its complexity. For example, many of the prima facie inconsistencies in the Resurrection story can be reconciled only if detailed scenarios of what might have happened are added to the traditional account.

One thing to notice is that the falsehood of the Resurrection can be understood in terms of the *disjunction* of all alternative explanatory theories. So even if the probability of the evidence relative to each alternative theory and our background assumptions is highly improbable, say one in one thousand, the sum of the probabilities relative to, say, 10 alternatives and our background assumptions would be one in one thousand. Thus, for Swinburne to arrive at the figure of one in one thousand he must assume that the probability of the evidence relative to each alternative and background assumption is even less than one in one thousand. This means by implication that Swinburne makes the extremely implausible assumption that the probability of the evidence relative to each alternative explanation is much lower than one in one thousand.[42]

Swinburne accepts the theory that Jesus was buried according to the scriptural tradition and rejects alternative accounts (p.175). But what historical accuracy do these traditional stories have?[43] Given Roman crucifixion customs, the prior probability that Jesus was buried is low. Even if Jewish customs were followed, his enemies probably buried Jesus ignominiously (and permanently) in a criminals' graveyard on Friday. Still another plausible scenario is that Joseph of Arimathea temporarily stored Jesus in Joseph's own tomb on Friday, and then in order to conform to Jewish law Jesus was buried in a criminals' graveyard on Saturday.[44]

To be sure, the above considerations only create a prior improbability of there being an empty tomb. This should not be confused with the posterior probability that is based on the prior probability *and* specific evidence.[45] More and different kinds of evidence would be needed to show that the posterior probability is low. For example, how would this prior improbability be weighed against the New Testament account of the witnesses to the empty tomb? What this does suggest is that in order to overcome this prior improbability, strong specific evidence is needed. The burden is surely on Swinburne to supply this evidence. Although it may be possible to argue that Swinburne has failed to meet this burden, I will simply point out here that it is unclear that he has done so.

Swinburne rejects the theory that Jesus' post-Resurrection appearances could be based on hallucinations shared by a number of witnesses on the grounds that it is hard to document.[46] But in fact there have been several well-documented cases of hallucination shared by a number of people.[47]

Swinburne really does not seriously consider the view I have suggested elsewhere that the Resurrection and post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus are based on legend.[48] Given the prior probability that Jesus was not buried in accordance with the traditional story, the legend view when combined with an assumption of widespread hallucination would go some way toward making sense of the evidence. These theories and others that I have not mentioned admittedly do not make the evidence very probable.[49] But there is no reason to suppose that the disjunction of these theories makes the probability of the historical evidence nearly as low as Swinburne needs in order to maintain that the probability of the Resurrection is over 50 percent.

APPLICATION OF BAYES'S THEOREM

My discussion so far can be summed up in terms of Bayes's Theorem which Swinburne uses implicitly in many parts of his book and explicitly in his appendix. Swinburne argues that the truth of theism t is as probable as not on our background k, that is $P(t/k) = 1/2$. He also argues that given the truth of theism and our background knowledge, God's Incarnation and Resurrection c is as probable as not, that is $P(c/t\&k) = 1/2$. Consequently, $P(c/k) = 1/2 \times 1/2 = 1/4$. Finally, he maintains that given God's Incarnation and Resurrection, the evidence e used to support God's Incarnation and Resurrection is one-tenth probable, that is $P(e/c\&k) = 1/10$. We have seen reasons so far to believe that these estimates are too high.

Swinburne next maintains that, given our general background knowledge and the *falsehood* of the Incarnation and the Resurrection, the probability of evidence e is extremely low. Indeed, he suggests that this probability is one one-thousandth, that is $P(e/\sim c\&k) = 1/1000$. This figure combined with his other estimates enables him to conclude that $P(c/e\&k)$ is nearly certain. In terms of one formulation of Bayes's Theorem:

$$P(c/e\&k) = P(c/k) \times P\,(e/c\&k)$$

divided by:

$$P(c/k) \times P\,(e/c\&k) + P\,(\sim c/k) \times P\,(e/\sim c\&k)$$

Plugging in Swinburne's numerical estimates:

$P(c/e\&k) = 1/4 \times 1/10$

divided by:

$(1/4 \times 1/10) + (3/4 \times 1/1000)$

equals:

100/103, a figure close to 1.

Let us now recompute the probability of $P(c/e\&k)$ with more realistic figures. Although I think it absurdly low, let us suppose that $(e/\sim c\&k) = 1/500$ instead of 1/1000. Let us accept Swinburne's estimate that $(e/c\&k) = 1/10$ although, as I have argued above, it seems much too high. Let us replace Swinburne's too generous estimate $P(c/k) = 1/4$ with the perhaps still too generous estimate $P(c/k) = 1/100$, that is $P(c/k) = P(t/k) \times P(c/t\&k) = 1/10 \times 1/10$. Then according to Bayes's Theorem:

$P(c/e\&k) = 1/100 \times 1/10$

divided by:

$(1/100 \times 1/10) + (99/100 \times 1/500)$

which equals 50/149 or about .335. Consequently, Swinburne has failed to show that it is probable that Jesus is Resurrected God Incarnate.

CONCLUSION

I conclude that Swinburne's defense of the Resurrection in terms of confirmation theory fails. All of his probability estimates are either unrealistically too high or too low. Once these are corrected, the probability of the Resurrection is well below 50 percent.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Jeffery Lowder for helpful comments in improving the paper.

2. Oxford University Press publishes all of the books mentioned.

3. Richard Swinburne, *An Introduction to Confirmation Theory* (London: Methuen, 1973).

4. Richard Swinburne, *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003). Reference to pages in this book will be made in the body of the text.

5. Ibid., p. 211.

6. Ibid., pp. 12–13.

7. Ibid., pp. 202–203.

8. Michael Martin, "Trying to Save God," *Free Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (Fall 1997): 58–61; Michael Martin, *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), pp. 55–66, 106–18, 139–46, 218–19, 303–306, 400–404.

9. He cannot know what the future free actions of his creatures will be, he cannot know what his future actions will be, he cannot know if any event governed by natural laws will occur since he cannot know now if he will intervene in the natural course of events. This seems to cover all possible future events.

10. See Martin, *Atheism*, p. 299.

11. Ibid., pp. 286–92.

12. Ibid., pp. 217–20.

13. Most philosophers of science make this point.

14. See Martin, *Atheism*, p.111.

15. See my critique of FWD in Martin, *Atheism*, chap. 15. To take one obvious omission: he makes no attempt to answer the objection that God could have made human beings with a tendency to do good. This would be compatible with the existence of free will since humans would be free to go against this tendency.

16. Swinburne, *Is There a God?* p. 92. See also his discussion in *The Evolution of the Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

17. Ibid.

18. See my discussion of Swinburne in Martin, *Atheism*, pp. 400–404.

19. Swinburne also argues that the existence of God explains religious experience. Limitations of space prevent me from considering his arguments here. See chap. 6 of Martin, *Atheism*.

20. Ibid., chap. 7.

21. For further development of this point see my paper "The Resurrection as Initially Improbable," printed in this anthology.

22. Swinburne, *The Resurrection*, p. 35.

23. Michael Martin, *Atheism, Morality, and Meaning* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2003), pp. 258–60; Michael Martin, *The Case Against Christianity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), pp. 254–56.

24. Swinburne, *The Resurrection*, p. 43.

25. Ibid.

26. Cf. J. L. Schellenberg, "Christianity Saved? Comments on Swinburne's Apologetic Strategies in the Tetralogy," *Religious Studies* 38 (2002): 295–97.

27. Swinburne, *The Resurrection*, p. 48.

28. Ibid., p. 49.

29. Martin, *Atheism, Morality, & Meaning*, chap. 9; Martin, *The Case Against Christianity*, chap. 6.

30. Swinburne, *The Resurrection*, p. 91.

31. Ibid., p. 89.

32. Ibid., p. 95.

33. See my discussion in Martin, *The Case Against Christianity*, p. 168.

34. Martin, *Atheism, Morality, & Meaning*, chap. 16; Martin, *The Case Against Christianity*, chap. 7.

35. See Matt. 16:28, and Mark. 9:1.

36. Martin, *Atheism, Morality, & Meaning*, chap. 18; Martin, *The Case Against Christianity*, chap. 3.

37. Martin, *Atheism, Morality, & Meaning*, pp. 311–12.

38. Swinburne, *The Resurrection*, pp. 12–13.

39. Robert M. Price, *Beyond Born Again,* chap. 5, http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/robert_price/beyond_born_again/. See E. F. Loftus, *Eyewitness Testimony* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

40. Swinburne, *The Resurrection*, p. 213.

41. William Lane Craig in *Five Views on Apologetics,* ed. Steven Cowan (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), pp. 125–27 makes the claim that the collective probability of alternative explanations is meaningless and a disjunction of all alternatives is not an alternative. Craig goes on to maintain that the only thing Christian apologists must do is show that the probability of the Resurrection is greater than any separate alternative. But there seems to be no good reason to suppose the collective probability of a disjunction statement is meaningless. In fact, such probabilities follow from standard interpretations of the calculus of probability. With respect to the thesis that the only thing that must be shown is that the probability of the Resurrection is greater than any separate alternative, see my refutation of this point in Martin, *Atheism, Morality, & Meaning*, pp. 312–13.

42. For a detailed evaluation of the evidence see Jeffery Jay Lowder's chapter in this volume, "Historical Evidence and the Empty Tomb: A Reply to William Lane Craig."

43. For more details see Lowder's chapter in the present volume.

44. I owe this point to Lowder.

45. Perhaps Swinburne means that the group hallucinations are a priori improbable. If so, the number of historical cases where they have occurred suggest that he is mistaken. Swinburne, *The Resurrection*, p. 185.

46. Martin, *Atheism, Morality, & Meaning*, p. 307. See also Keith Parson's essay "Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli on the Hallucination Theory" in this book.

47. Martin, *Atheism, Morality, & Meaning*, pp. 304-306.

48. See, for example, Richard Carrier's spirited defense that Jesus' body was stolen in his chapter, "The Plausibility of Theft."

49. This paper is an expanded version of a review of Swinburne's book that will appear in *Religious Studies*.

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REFORMED EPISTEMOLOGY AND BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

EVAN FALES

Jesus loves me, this I know
For the Bible tells me so.

So goes a familiar song. But what does the Bible in fact say? And is what it says true? How do we know what it says, and whether those things are true? One might initially think that, respecting the first question if not the second, a straightforward reading of the text should settle the matter. But when it comes to the Bible—and sacred texts generally—we all know that matters are very far from so simple as that. One might hope that, in the course of the centuries, we have managed to eke out a few stable insights. But perhaps not.

On both the question of proper interpretation and that of truth, Christians have traditionally fallen (broadly speaking) into two camps. According to one view, understanding and evaluation of the Canon are properly mediated by the Church, its designated authorities, and the traditions it preserves. According to the other, these matters rest ultimately with individuals, guided (of course) by the literal content of the text but also by some special perceptivity supplied by God—a special grace or insight provided by the Holy Spirit. Much of what was at stake in the battles fought during the Reformation concerned which of these two views was correct.

During the Enlightenment matters took a new turn. Reason asserted its independence of both tradition (cum institutionalized authority) and divine inspiration. The Bible came increasingly under the scrutiny of scholars who, though for the most part Christians, accepted the principles and procedures of a developing scientific historiography grounded in common sense, ordinary inductive canons, and certain specialized techniques of historical research—that is, the procedures found proper to the evaluation of nonsacred texts and to the sacred texts of the "heathen." Some localized squabbles aside, the techniques developed by modern historiography were not themselves particularly controversial, *except* when applied to the sacred texts of the "home" religion, texts that appear to make quite striking historical claims. Putting matters bluntly, the debate focused on the Enlightenment demand that the historian cannot countenance special pleading on behalf of Christianity's foundational texts.

The new methods were not adopted lightly or with open arms, but after much struggle. Contemporary apologists sometimes write as if modern Bible critics just *assumed* some sort of ontological or methodological naturalism because it suited them, and not because they had read, e.g., Spinoza or Hume or Kant, and found in them arguments carrying conviction.

But maybe those arguments shouldn't have convinced them; maybe they rely upon a fundamentally misconceived conception of how religious knowledge (at least) is acquired. That is, indeed, what a number of contemporary philosophers would have us believe. The philosophers I shall be discussing usually help themselves to a trend in current epistemology which rejects the internalist foundationalism characteristic of the Enlightenment in favor of externalism. Perhaps the most prominent of these is Alvin Plantinga, who sees in externalism an echo of the view of religious knowledge that can be found in Calvin.[1]

But Plantinga is not alone, and what I have to say about his Reformed hermeneutics will apply in large measure to others such as Stephen Evans and Peter van Inwagen.[2] All of them reject the methodological constraints that characterize modern historiography, and though they welcome some of the results of research conducted within that framework, they argue for what is in effect a return to the hermeneutical approaches of an earlier era: roughly, the sixteenth century. That, I shall argue, is a serious mistake.

REFORMED EPISTEMOLOGY

According to Plantinga, Christians (or more carefully, some Christians) know what he calls the Great Things of the Gospels—the essential salvific message of the New Testament (complete with a story about why salvation is needed and how it must be effected)—in a properly basic way. They do not reason to these truths—for example, by using the biblical text as evidence—but are directly led to know them by the "internal instigation" of the Holy Spirit (hereafter, HS). As Plantinga sees it, reading or hearing the Bible might serve as an *occasion* for one's coming to believe these things, but this belief-forming mechanism is not to be understood as a matter of performing overt or covert inferences from evidence. It is rather that reading or hearing these words may open one's heart to the promptings of the HS.[3]

A bit more fully, on Plantinga's A/C (Aquinas/Calvin) model of Christian knowledge, human beings are endowed with a *sensus divinitatis* (SD) which, properly functioning, enables them to enter into a right relationship with God. Because original sin degraded the ability of the SD (and of our cognitive and affective faculties more generally) to function properly, we cannot by our own efforts restore that relationship. But because God has sent his HS to assist us, and sent his Son to atone for sin, we (or some of us) can regain sanctification. Because the HS instills the Great Things in Christians *directly*, and because this is a reliable belief-forming mechanism, Christians know these things in a properly basic way—provided that belief is accompanied by sufficiently strong conviction.

Well, what do they thus know? What are these Great Things? Here, Plantinga does some rather careful—carefully vague—gerrymandering. He suggests that they comprise, roughly, those doctrines agreed upon by the various historically major Creeds. They include these doctrines: that our proper relationship to God was destroyed by original sin, that God, via a virgin birth, sent Jesus, who is his only begotten Son, to rectify matters, and that Jesus atoned for our sins on the cross, rose from the dead after three days, and will one day return to judge the quick and the dead, saving some to eternal life with God.[4]

I offer the above list with considerable hesitation. The object of Christian faith, says Plantinga, is the Great Things, "the whole magnificent scheme of salvation. . . . The content of faith is just the central teachings of

the gospel; it is contained in the intersection of the great Christian creeds" (*Warranted Christian Belief* [WCB], p. 248). Now Plantinga cannily does not tell us which are the "great" creeds. Perhaps we should include at least the Ecumenical Creeds—the Apostles', Athanasian, Chalcedonian, and Nicene Creeds. But that won't do: inspection reveals that the intersection of their doctrines is the null set. To make matters worse, there are literally hundreds of Christian creeds, and thousands of declarations in which one group or denomination anathematizes the creedal doctrines of another.[5] I shall return to this; for the moment, let us set it aside and use the list of doctrines I proposed above.

A properly basic belief that is generated by a sufficiently reliable cognitive process in favorable circumstances, and that is accompanied by the right kind of doxastic experience—strong confidence—has sufficient warrant to constitute knowledge. But it is only prima facie warrant: it can be defeated, e.g., by evidence that counts against the belief or against the reliability of its means of acquisition, if that evidence sufficiently undermines confidence.[6]

HISTORICAL BIBLICAL CRITICISM: METHODS

Is Christian faith subject to defeat? Plantinga discusses several potential defeaters; the one we are examining is the findings of what he calls Historical Biblical Criticism (HBC).[7] To this enterprise, Plantinga opposes Traditional Christian Biblical Commentary (TBC). Let us first set out some central commitments of TBC (WCB, pp. 374–85).

1. TBC holds that Scripture is *perspicuous*. In its main lines, it can be correctly "understood and grasped and accepted by anyone of normal intelligence . . ." (WCB, p. 374).
2. TBC holds that Scripture is divinely inspired. This means that the Bible—all of it—is really one book, whose author is God. It is therefore authoritative for Christians. Moreover, the unity of the Bible licenses using one part to interpret another part. This is so even though the human amanuensis—e.g., Isaiah—may not have understood that what he was writing foreshadowed the coming of Jesus of Nazareth.[8]

3. The way in which a believer comes to *know* that the Canon is divinely inspired is not by way of historical investigation, but by being so informed by the HS (which either implants just this belief or one entailing it—e.g., that the HS has ensured that the Church was founded upon, and has preserved, the essential truths about salvation).[9]
4. Nevertheless—and in contrast with point 1—Plantinga concedes that there is much in Scripture that is opaque, much that resists easy interpretation. (With this we may emphatically agree. It is *one* of the factors that necessitated the development of HBC.)

As we might expect, Plantinga's attack on HBC moves primarily at the level of an assault upon the *methodology* of HBC; his taking issue with the *results* of HBC is confined primarily to some disparaging remarks about what he takes to be some of the more outlandish claims made by HBC scholars. This is not insignificant. While the methodological issues are certainly on the table and need to be examined, much of the conviction that HBC findings carry derives from familiarity with the empirical details. Nor is this an accident: skillful play does not require ability to articulate the rules of the game.

HBC, as Plantinga says, undertakes an assessment of the meaning and historical reliability of Scripture from the perspective of reason (and sense) alone. It refuses the assistance of faith; it eschews the authority of creed, tradition, and magisterium. In so doing, it understands itself to adhere to the conditions of a scientific method. And in so doing, it begins by construing Scripture as a series of books (or shorter passages) composed and pasted together by human authors and redactors, whose meaning is the messages intended by those human individuals.

Still, it would be overly sanguine to suppose that the defenders of HBC have been able to formulate a unified account of their methodological commitments. Rather, there are at best several such accounts. In the face of these disparate accounts, Plantinga's strategy is to divide and conquer. So let's look at the accounts Plantinga considers, and ask what is to be made of them. Plantinga discerns within HBC three methodological positions: Troeltschian HBC, Duhemian HBC, and Spinozistic HBC (as he dubs them). Let us proceed by considering in order the central tenets of these positions, and Plantinga's commentary on them. I shall then offer some general reflections

upon Plantinga's treatment of HBC, turning from this to a comparison of the methods and fruits of HBC with those of TBC. Finally, I shall suggest some conclusions that we should draw from this study concerning the workings of the HS and the prospects for the A/C model of Christian knowledge.

Troeltschian HBC (TrHBC)[10] is characterized by four principles:

1. The principle of methodological doubt: historical inquiry can never attain absolute certainty, but only relative degrees of probability.
2. The principle of analogy: historical knowledge is possible [only] because all events are similar in principle, i.e., subject to uniform laws of nature.
3. The principle of correlation: no event can be isolated from the sequence of historical cause and effect [history is a causally closed system].
4. The principle of autonomy: no secular or sectarian authority can dictate to the historian which conclusions he or she should reach.[11]

Though these principles have an innocuous interpretation, Plantinga takes TrHBC to understand them specifically in such a way as to exclude miracles. I shall return to this.

The essential prescription of Duhemian HBC (DuHBC) is that historical research must proceed on assumptions upon which all parties to the discussion can agree, so as to make possible genuine dialogue and progress.[12] Plantinga suggests that this ban on partisan presuppositions would leave Bible scholars with little indeed by way of either substantive claims or methodological principles, there being so little upon which the interested parties can agree.[13]

Finally, Spinozistic HBC (SpHBC) proposes what might seem an improvement on DuHBC; it allows just those conclusions to be drawn by historians that are legitimated by reason alone.[14] Plantinga's animadversions on the human faculty of reason are well known; reason is allegedly not in general less frail than our other cognitive faculties, and in particular, should surely not be given priority over such a reliable and authoritative source of knowledge as the HS, if the A/C model is correct.

Now Plantinga's treatment suggests in the first place that these three types of HBC represent different methodological schools of thought within

HBC, ones that might lead to opposing historical conclusions. Indeed, though Plantinga does not explicitly say so, one might get the impression that the widely differing opinions among scholars who practice HBC can in significant measure be traced to disagreements over which methodology is correct. In any event, Plantinga, Evans, and van Inwagen agree that what they see as the disarray within HBC scholarship is an independent reason for Christians not to be overly concerned about the implications of HBC for the faith.

I believe there is a better explanation for what is going on here. Are there deep methodological differences that divide HBC scholars? Or do we have what is more nearly a familiar phenomenon: the practitioners of an empirical science attempting, often rather ineptly, to perform the task that even philosophers of science find vexingly difficult, viz. to formulate abstractly and generally the principles that guide their research? If you ask any dozen historians or physicists to articulate such principles, you may be sure of getting a dozen more or less different—and usually clumsy—formulations.

Naturally, HBC scholars do have differences over matters of both methodology and actual historical findings. But there is little reason to attribute this to ill-conceived global principles. The genuine debates, I suggest, occur closer to ground level: they are debates over historical matters—e.g., over the significance of certain Jewish and pagan ideologies in the formation of early Christian views about resurrection; or over specialized tools—e.g., the significance and security of conclusions that can be reached by paleographic analysis or source criticism.

So far as the more global issues go—the correct assessment of testimony for miracles, or the proper way to judge the revelatory claims of ancient texts—it would be more nearly fair to say that HBC grew out of (and its partisans were convinced by) the arguments of Isaac La Peyrere, Spinoza, Locke, Hume, Paine, and Kant. Surely such a compressed and popularizing characterization of this critical sensibility as Bultmann's much-maligned comment that we moderns can no longer believe in miracles once we avail ourselves of the fruits of modern technology, is properly to be understood by situating it within this intellectual context. So ineptitude in formulating the operative methodological principles goes almost no distance toward convicting HBC scholars of incompetence in their historical research or toward undermining their conclusions.

But perhaps we should judge HBC by its fruits; and haven't those fruits

presented the spectacle of wildly different interpretations of Scripture and historical judgments about those momentous events that took place in ancient Galilee and Judea? What are we to make of this chaos of conclusions?

Well, one thing to make of it—and Plantinga, for one, will agree—is that the evidence we have (the ordinary evidence, that is) is dismayingly thin on many matters of paramount religious importance. That—together no doubt with the fact that many of these matters *are* of paramount religious importance—has tempted scholars to explore a wide variety of possibilities, some quite speculative, that seem to make sense of at least some significant stretch of the data we do have. But that is what creative scholarship is supposed to do; and we are asking for false security if we demand firm consensus where data are scanty and inferences difficult.

HISTORICAL BIBLICAL CRITICISM: FINDINGS

Still, it is germane to ask whether HBC has supplied reasonably firm historical conclusions about anything concerning the biblical narratives. And, of course, it has. A serious listing of such established results is out of the question, but a few bear mention that illustrate the issues before us.

1. We know that the creation account given in the first three chapters of Genesis owes a large debt in style, imagery, and content to the creation myths of the Sumerians and other Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) pagan religions.
2. We have good reason to believe that the seven-headed dragon mentioned in Revelation is derived from a similar beast that inhabits the myth world of the Sumerians.[15]
3. There appears to be not a single biblical prophecy that meets minimal conditions for being genuinely prophetic, and whose fulfillment can be independently confirmed.[16] Indeed, the two prophecies attributed to Jesus that are surely of most central concern to Christians—Matt. 12:39–40 and 16:27–28—have on the face of it been falsified. These failures, and others, are in themselves evidence for HBC scholars that (a) the HS was not at work—certainly not consistently so—in providing correct prophecy to the biblical authors, and (b)

that therefore all biblical prophetic texts, including those whose fulfillment is biblically attested, are to be viewed with suspicion.

4. There is a general consensus within HBC that the Gospels were composed later than the collapse of the Jewish revolt in 70 CE. There are multiple lines of evidence for this, but Evans rejects the claim as illustrating HBC prejudice against the "prophetic anticipation" of the Roman suppression of the revolt. In support of earlier dates of composition, Evans reverts narrowly to the familiar—and lame—argument that Acts (hence Luke, hence Mark) must have been written prior to 64 CE, as it ends abruptly prior to the martyrdom of Paul in Rome around that date.

That argument presupposes that there is no other plausible explanation for this feature of Acts. But there is another explanation: in fact, there are two. The first is that the rest of Acts has simply been lost. The second points out that the early Church had enormous hopes pinned on Paul's mission to Rome. They (Paul especially) were engaged in a calculated effort to win over Roman officials, and much was riding on the success of that effort. This concern for a Pauline success story in Rome led even to the circulation of an early Christian forgery—admiring letters to Paul, purportedly from the Roman statesman Seneca. It would hardly be surprising if the Roman execution of Paul was such a severe embarrassment to the Church that the author of Acts felt it best to omit it—and hence to terminate his history by portraying Paul's stay in Rome in decidedly positive terms.

5. Both HBC and ANE archaeology widely concur that the Exodus story is a myth.[17]

There remains speculation that there may have been Canaanitic slaves in Egypt who escaped and made their way, via Midian perhaps, into the hill country of Palestine to join with refugees from other areas to form a proto-Israelitic confederation.[18]

6. It is generally acknowledged that an understanding of the Gospel passion narratives cannot proceed in isolation from an examination of the large body of ANE literature and cultic practice that deploys the

notion of death and resurrection, and links it to other themes that pervade the lore of the Hebrew Bible and a wide range of ANE religious traditions—e.g., the theme of descent into, and rescue from or control over, the chaos-waters of the deep (the *tehom*), which appears repeatedly in the Hebrew Bible (the original parting of the waters, the Noachic flood, the crossing of the Red Sea and Jordan River, the descent into Sheol of the king in numerous of the Psalms, the ritual of baptism, and much more).[19]

MIRACLES?

In this debate, a perennial lightning-rod issue is the question of miracles. Plantinga has rather little to say about the possibility of God's performing miracles; Evans says just a bit more. The issue is vexed, unfortunately, by the deep disagreements among philosophers concerning the very notions of causation and laws of nature. Because of this, my own remarks will have to be quite cursory.

It is helpful to divide up the question about miracles. If miracles are understood to be departures from the regular operations of nature, there are first the metaphysical questions to be faced: in what sense must miracles "violate" the laws of nature (if at all); and just how does God accomplish them? Second, there are a number of epistemic issues. Can an instance of divine causation or intervention be scientifically investigated; can an event's claim to reveal the hand of God be given strong scientific credentials? If not, can there be any other reason to credit divine intervention? And then Hume's question: can the occurrence of a miracle be reasonably believed on the strength of testimony?

As to the metaphysical question, Plantinga and Evans concur that we cannot just assume that the physical universe is a closed system, immune from supernatural interventions. So when the miraculous occurs, no physical law need actually be violated. It could just be that, in addition to normal physical causes, some divine force is present. Unfortunately, this way of understanding miracles (though, I think, the best account available) does not avoid the difficulty in making miracles intelligible, for virtually any sort of divine intervention would violate the laws of conservation of energy and

momentum.[20] Moreover, theists must face the "how" question: just how does God manage it?

On the first two epistemic questions, I shall just have to be dogmatic. I cannot find any principled reason why, *if* supernatural causation is metaphysically possible, its presence could not be detected. A central mission of science is to discover the causes of things, and if an event cannot be sufficiently explained by appeal to natural causes, an eligible hypothesis is a nonnatural one—though that leaves much open concerning the nature of that cause. There would however be a burden on theists to formulate, more rigorously than they have, hypotheses about the mechanisms of divine causation.

But the real epistemic issue, of course, is the Humean one. Here I want to direct attention to just two fundamental issues. The first has received considerable attention from Reformed epistemologists, but the second is regularly overlooked. First, where does testimony get its epistemic credentials? And second, what are the significant options to which HBC can appeal to explain miracle reports?

THE EVIDENTIAL CREDENTIALS OF TESTIMONY

Classical foundationalists typically restrict the cognitive processes that yield knowledge to two: a priori intuition and experience (with memory perhaps as a distinct third faculty). In contrast, Reformed epistemologists characteristically suppose that a much wider variety of irreducibly distinct processes can yield knowledge—including testimony. Evans argues (HCJF, sec. 8.4) that Hume and his followers are mistaken that the initial or prima facie credentials of testimony must be established inductively from sense experience; and he takes this to have significant bearing upon assessment of biblical miracle reports. Evans depends upon an allegedly decisive refutation of Hume's "reductionist thesis" by C. A. J. Coady.[21]

Here I need to draw attention to two points central to Coady's attack on Hume's thesis. The first concerns Coady's argument that reliance upon testimony is an ineliminable and irreducible component of our knowledge in general, because any attempt to justify such reliance by induction from personal verification of testimony will inevitably itself rely upon further testimony. Coady writes:

> We are told by Hume that we only trust in testimony because experience has shown it to be reliable, yet where experience means individual observation . . . this seems plainly false and, on the other hand, where it means common experience (i.e., reliance on the observations of others) it is surely question-begging.[22]

Coady proceeds to reprimand Hume for *himself* relying on communal experience to establish such general propositions as, e.g., that dead men don't rise—on the grounds that this has "*never* been observed in any age or country." Not only is Hume using testimony, but surely he is tendentiously privileging favorable testimony over the NT reports.

This is a needlessly uncharitable reading of Hume; but to see why, we need to look at Coady's second principle argument. This is a carefully developed version of the argument that a general practice of truth-telling is a necessary condition for the existence of any public language. So it is an a priori condition on the possibility of testimony—and not an inductively arrived at conclusion—that it is in general truthful. Now this is correct, but it is not strong enough to serve Evans's purpose; nor does it show that Hume was fundamentally mistaken about the epistemic bona fides of testimony.

We may put the matter as follows. It is true that the possibility of radical interpretation (or learning one's first language) presupposes that the assertoric use of language by informants is not steeped in ignorance and fraud. So *if* the sounds made by others constitute a system of linguistic communication, it must be the case that they generally say what they believe, and generally believe what is true—at least with respect to features of the world more or less straightforwardly detectable by common observation. This is not an empirical matter. But *that* the noises others make are interpretable as a language—and of course, what given stretches of language can plausibly be taken to mean—those certainly *are* empirical matters; and it is hard to see what recourse an individual speaker could have in determining this, other than to his or her sensory faculties and reasoning.[23] So we can construe the hypothesis that what we are told has a prima facie claim to truth as the empirical hypothesis that we are in fact being given testimony—which carries with it the (weak) implication of truth.

In this sense, Coady's second argument, while containing an important observation, does not show that Hume's reductionist thesis is false. Evans,

however, thinks that the interpretive charity mandated by the argument does help to establish the autonomy of testimony as an irreducible source of knowledge. I shall now argue that, on the contrary, it counts *against* Evans, and also against Coady's uncharitable reading of Hume.

Evans recognizes that the proper way to frame the question about miracle reports is to bracket skeptical doubts of the most general sort, doubts that would undermine empirical knowledge claims *tout court*. Given what has just been said, this means that in addressing the present issue, we must accept the ordinary inductive procedures that permit the learning of a language. We can think of this process as involving two intercalated kinds of induction: (1) inductions that, operating with a provisional principle of charity, confirm semantic hypotheses and thereby enable us to identify the content of testimony, and (2) further inductions that enable us to "fine-tune" the principle of charity itself, as we search for hypotheses that best accommodate our entire range of relevant data. These data may include testimony that contradicts firsthand knowledge of the facts or other testimony, folk-psychological observations informing us of the circumstances under which people are least prone and most prone to utter falsehoods, and contextual cues signaling figurative use of language.

Thus considered, our mastery of linguistic communication can be seen to imbed a ground-level principle of interpretive charity that applies especially to the domain of the familiar and easily recognizable, *together with* inductively based wisdom concerning the factors that promote error and fraud. Thus when Hume refers to the "uniform experience of mankind" respecting the permanence of death, I suggest that he is implicitly appealing to testimony and experience respecting which there is no prima facie reason for doubt, *including* doubt raised by the very fact of disagreement with a large preponderance of other testimony or experience. This is entirely in order. It is just a matter of finding the hypothesis most strongly confirmed by the total data, to suggest that testimony out of step with uniformities we have reason to accept (on the basis of large bodies of independent data) is more likely false than true—*even* if special motives for fraud such as those associated with religious propaganda are not in play.[24]

For all that, I would insist that our principle of charity cannot be lightly overthrown in favor of an imputation of folly or fraud to the biblical authors. Far from it: giving due weight to the apparent intelligence, conviction, and

sincerity of the NT writers counts strongly against either of those explanations. But on the other side, we *do* have the improbability of the events themselves. What to do?

It would be a mistake of the first order to be drawn into the false dilemma of supposing that we must decide between miracle and fraud.[25] For there is a third possibility, and because of it, Evans's defense of a charitable reading of Scripture is quite compatible with a Humean rejection of miracles. We need only to reject the assumption that the NT authors intended to engage in historical reportage. How obvious is it, then, that this was their intent?

TESTIMONIES OF THE SPIRIT

As we have seen, Reformed epistemologists like to make heavy weather over disagreements among HBC scholars, while at the same time doing careful editing when it comes to saying what the HS teaches. Being externalists, they can, of course, insist that if the HS is a reliable guide to truth, then an individual who has been guided by the HS to believe (a correct version of) the Christian story will have knowledge. But *which* version of the Christian story? Just which Christians are those whose beliefs have been arrived at in this way?

I earlier remarked that Reformed epistemology would, in effect, return us to the biblical hermeneutics of the sixteenth century. That century, after all, experienced perhaps above all others the heyday of the Spirit—for, phenomenologically speaking at least, evidence of the indwelling Spirit haunted nearly every hamlet in Europe; and never were claims to have been taught by the HS made more stridently or with greater conviction.

Did these voices achieve greater unanimity over Christian doctrine and the proper interpretation of Scripture than HBC scholars have? They did not; and produced rather less gentlemanly ways of settling their doctrinal disputes to boot: from this period date, e.g., Calvin's execution of Michael Servitus, Luther's anathematization of Jews and Anabaptists, and the Synod of Dordt's expulsion of Arminians—to say nothing of the Inquisition and the Thirty Years' War. So evidently, Christians themselves have had—and continue to have—a rugged hard time discerning who is Spirit taught.

Plantinga does not trouble to enter these lists,[26] and van Inwagen speaks

globally of the teachings preserved by "the Church." But Evans does make an attempt to provide some criteria for inspiration. Evans is rightly suspicious of *phenomenological* criteria for the indwelling of the HS; given the history just alluded to, this should come as no surprise. His primary criteria are (a) that the doctrines thus received should conform to Scripture, and (b) that the alleged revelations should yield good "fruits" in the life of the believer—a sense of peace, humility, and sanctity.

Now as Evans recognizes, these criteria are starkly question-begging. They are so on multiple counts. As to (a), there has been no lack of disagreement among those putatively guided by the HS *precisely over what Scripture does teach*. More dramatically, some Anabaptists went Calvinist hermeneutics one better. Observing that Scripture itself could claim authority only on the strength of having been received from God, they held that the direct teaching of the indwelling Spirit can trump any doctrine mediated by the written word.[27]

As to (b), we may observe that the fruits reflect values accorded criterial standing on the strength of a prior commitment to certain Christian doctrines. Even if a *necessary* concomitant of true inspiration, they are clearly not sufficient: the supposition that good fruits are the effects of the HS ignores the much more mundane and familiar explanation in terms of social reinforcement by a community of peers who affirm and reward such behaviors.

LEVELS OF KNOWLEDGE

Externalists characteristically distinguish between knowledge that p and knowledge that one knows that p; one can possess the former without the latter. So, one might know the Great Things in a properly basic way, courtesy of the HS, but not realize that this is so—of course, one might also falsely suppose it to be so. In view of the cacophony of Christian voices claiming inspiration, this should be cold comfort to believers. To steal a phrase of Alston's, we are offered bread but given a stone.[28]

Perhaps a believer can know, in a properly HS-induced basic way, that the HS himself has delivered the Great (or other) Things. But that strategy invites vicious regress or circularity. Nor will it do to fob off the problem of circularity that threatens second-level justification or warrant by appeal to

the ultimate circularity of all justification.[29] For we have agreed to bracket *general* skepticism, and as testimony is epistemically less fundamental than sense experience and induction, demand for a second-level justification of testimonial evidence that makes noncircular appeal to direct experience is entirely in order. Moreover, mystical experiences—and by parity appeals to the help of the HS—are not epistemically on a par with sense experience, because they are not independently checkable.[30]

But matters are considerably worse than this. The cacophony of putative leadings of the HS counts as evidence *against* Plantinga's A/C model and van Inwagen's appeal to the magisterium of "the Church." Either the HS has been unaccountably (and unconscionably) capricious and selective in its election of some subclass of Christians, allowing many others to be misled by pseudoinspirations, or else there is simply no HS.[31]

It will hardly answer to try to soften the corrosive implications of HBC scholarship and of the confusion of Christian "revelations" to select out some set of Christian doctrines, vaguely enough understood, that command widespread agreement among Christians and that are the supposedly essential doctrines of the faith, making allowance that noncentral biblical passages might actually be false. Van Inwagen, for example argues (GKM, pp. 172–77) that the false passages are such as "do no harm." But surely, major contradictions (to mention just one difficulty among many) *do* harm the intelligibility of Scripture and foment Christian strife—to say nothing of general and reasonable distrust of the texts. But worse: to distance oneself from the *details* of the biblical texts would be to miss most of their richness and much of their message. One of the enormous advantages of understanding these texts by using the tools of myth analysis is that many of the difficulties, e.g., with contradictions, simply vanish.[32] Here, then, is *one* reason to doubt that a primary purpose of Scripture is recording history.

PERSPICUOUS OR PERPLEXING?

One of the signature doctrines of Traditional Biblical Commentary, as Plantinga understands it, is the perspicuousness of Scripture. This has some plausibility: it is entirely plausible that Scripture would have been comprehensible by an intended audience—by ancient Jews and Gentiles—with the

recognition that there may have been some levels of meaning directed to *hoi poloi* and others meant for sophisticates. It is another matter altogether to claim that Scripture is perspicuous *for us now*. The difficulties besetting HBC and enormous disagreements within TBC are in themselves sufficient to make it entirely clear that Scripture is *anything but* perspicuous for contemporary lay Christians.

It should hardly be necessary to belabor this point. Even within the ambit of TBC, how easy is it to understand the nature of original sin by reference to the Genesis story? Why should we consider it possible to understand NT talk of death and resurrection without scholarly recourse to scholarly knowledge of the ANE context for such talk? (Is 1 Cor. 15 a model of perspicuous prose? Is Paul's meaning transparent when he claims to die every day?) It takes hardly any reflection to recognize that similar problems arise with understanding the meaning of claims about heaven and Sheol, or angels and demons. Yet these are hardly matters peripheral to Christian soteriology. Indeed, it is telling that one can ask almost any lay Christian a few probing questions regarding the nature of the soul and reveal an almost complete conceptual whiteout.

I want, in conclusion, to suggest that adoption of the hermeneutical approaches recommended by Plantinga, Evans, and van Inwagen would represent not only a cognitively disastrous step backward in Bible studies, but a dangerous one. Nineteenth-century Bible scholars and their heirs were moved not by a tendentious naturalism but by a respect for common sense and an acute awareness of the intellectual and social disasters of sixteenth-century religiosity. The Reformation era, permeated by the spectral whisperings of the HS, is one whose religious hostilities echo worrisomely in the shrill "culture-wars" rhetoric of contemporary right-wing ideologues.

Though he never actually defends the A/C model, Plantinga offers on behalf of it something like the following argument:

1. Christians know the Great Things of the Gospels.
2. If Christians know the Great Things, then in all probability something like the A/C model is correct.
3. Therefore, in all probability, something like the A/C model is correct.

I believe we should take Plantinga's *modus ponens* as our *modus tollens*.

NOTES

1. Because I am a committed internalist, I must face the question whether to engage the issue by attacking Reformed epistemology, or whether to argue on my opponent's turf. As I proceed, it will become evident that I do both: I shall bring out internal difficulties that a Reformed hermeneutic must face; and I shall challenge the background epistemology on second-order grounds, by bringing forward evidential challenges to the claim that the interpretative traditions to which Plantinga et al. appeals have indeed been reliably informed or inspired by the Holy Spirit.

I shall be discussing primarily Plantinga's view as articulated in his recent *Warranted Christian Belief* [WCB] (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) but also make reference to C. Stephen Evans, *The Historical Christ and the Jesus of Faith: The Incarnational Narrative as History* (hereafter HCJF) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), and to Peter van Inwagen, *God, Knowledge, & Mystery: Essays in Philosophical Theology*, pt. 2 (hereafter GKM) (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

2. It is not clear that van Inwagen is committed to anything like a Reformed account of religious knowledge. See, e.g., "Genesis and Evolution," in van Inwagen, GKM, p. 159, where he says,

> . . . it may be that there are certain people who know that a Creator exists and know this because of their mystery [*sic.*!] of a vast range of data too complex to be summarized in anything so simple as a single argument.
>
> My own guess is that [this] sort of knowledge [does not] exist. If there are people who *know* that there is a Creator, this must be due to factors other than (or perhaps in addition to) the inferences they have drawn from observations of the natural world. . . .

Van Inwagen goes on to say (pp. 180–81) that the reasons he himself has for accepting Christianity being inarticulable, such reasoning as can be given voice will be no more probative than that to which the defense of, e.g., many philosophical positions can appeal. This sounds like a kind of mute evidentialism. Whatever it is, it is worth noting that one could replace it with Plantinga's claim that the essential propositions of the faith are properly basic, without damage to the rest of van Inwagen's argument against critical studies.

3. I do not think Plantinga's account is remotely adequate to the phenomenology of the formation of religious beliefs. But that is a topic I cannot pursue here.

4. Moreover, we are to believe that these things are quite *literally* true—whatever that may exactly mean.

5. Perhaps Plantinga meant to suggest that the Great Truths encompass the union, rather than the intersection, of whatever Plantinga means by the "great" creeds. That would certainly yield a richer set of doctrines. But dangerously rich: absent a careful selection of which Christian creeds are the great ones, this strategy risks generating a set that is multiply inconsistent.

6. Plantinga's characterization of defeaters is given in WCB, pp. 359–66. There are a few niceties that need not detain us here.

7. Van Inwagen has the same enterprise in mind when he describes what he calls "critical studies" as

> . . . those historical studies which either deny the authority of the New Testament or else maintain a methodological neutrality on the question of its authority, and which attempt, by methods that presuppose either a denial of or neutrality about its authority, to investigate such matters as authorship, dates, histories of composition, historical reliability, and mutual dependency of the various books of the New Testament. (GKM, p. 163)

8. Wouldn't God have whispered *that* rather important piece of information into Isaiah's ear? Well, maybe he did; maybe he also told Isaiah not to write it down. Or maybe he judged that it was best for Isaiah not to understand this. Yet Plantinga thinks it highly improbable that God wouldn't want *us* to know these things.

9. By way of comparison, van Inwagen holds that he knows for inarticulable reasons these Great Truths, and takes it to be a historical fact that the early Church preached, understood, and preserved the Gospel narratives *as* historical fact, reliable on essential matters. Van Inwagen does not tell us how he knows what the early Church's understanding of the Gospel narratives was, nor how, absent HBC, one can know the historical claim his case rests on.

10. Which Plantinga attributes to such scholars as John Collins, Van Harvey, John Maquarrie, and Langdon Gilkey. Plantinga sees A. E. Harvey, E. P. Sanders, Barnabas Lindars, and Jon Levenson as more or less Duhemian; and John Meier as at times Duhemian and at times Spinozistic.

11. See WBC, pp. 391–93.

12. Ibid., pp. 396–97.

13. Oddly enough, elsewhere in WCB, Plantinga defines epistemic possibility in terms of what is "consistent with what we know, where 'what we know' is what all (or most) of the participants in the discussion agree on" (p. 169). This definition—crucial to his claim that the A/C model is epistemically possible—suffers exactly the same infirmity.

14. See WBC, p. 398. Plantinga would have done better to refer to the formulation given by John Locke; Locke argues that our ultimate appeal must be to reason and sense experience. See *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, bk. 4, chap. 18. I shall be defending this claim of Locke's.

15. See Simo Parpola, "From Whence the Beast?" *Bible Review* (Dec. 1999): 24. Parpola also has linked the Christian notions of Jesus as a perfect Son of God and as savior to similar notions in Assyrian kingship ideology (see his "Sons of God," *Archaeology Odyssey* (Nov./Dec. 1999): 18 passim.

16. See Fales, "Can Mystics See God?" in *Contemporary Debates in the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Michael L. Peterson (forthcoming) for a more detailed discussion.

17. See Baruch Halpern, "The Exodus from Egypt: Myth or Reality?" in *The Rise of*

Ancient Israel, ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1992); the articles by Ze'ev Herzog and Itzhaq Beit-Arieh in section A of *Archaeology and the Bible*: vol. 1; *Early Israel*, ed. Hershel Shanks and Dan P. Cole (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1990); and Nadav Na'aman, "The 'Conquest of Canaan' in the Book of Joshua and in History," in *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel*, ed. Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na'aman (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1994).

18. See Hershel Shanks, ed., *Frank Moore Cross: Conversations with a Bible Scholar* (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1994).

19. The literature is very large. The *locus classicus* is, of course, James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. More recent work includes *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel*, ed. S. H. Hooke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), George Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), and Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Empty Tomb in the Gospel According to Mark," *Hermes and Athena: Biblical Exegesis and Philosophical Theology*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Thomas P. Flint (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).

20. Plantinga adds (WCB, p. 395) that God could, if need be, abrogate the laws of nature, and could do so (WCB, p. 406) in temporary and limited ways that would not systematically undermine our understanding of the world (including historical understanding). But this is very far from evident. On at least some views—e.g., that laws are grounded in metaphysically necessary connections between universals—"abrogation" would amount to wrecking—or rather exchanging for another one—the entire scheme of laws.

21. C. A. J. Coady, *Testimony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). Coady's nuanced discussion deserves much closer treatment than I can devote to it here.

22. Ibid., p. 80.

23. It might be that we are somehow "hard-wired" to acquire language without making explicit to ourselves either the general presuppositions required by a rational reconstruction of this process, or the inductions to specific word meanings. It remains true that *justification* for one's semantic beliefs must be understood in terms of such inductions by the autonomous individual.

24. Independent congruent testimonies make, of course, a much stronger case for an event than a single source, just because plausible skeptical explanations for the congruence are typically hard to come by. Evans and other apologists often suggest that the NT authors provide such congruent independent witnesses for miracles. But of course we know no such thing; indeed, the evidence weighs heavily in favor of dependence. What is therefore really astonishing, if we assume an intent to report historical events, is the level of *discrepancy* between the NT accounts.

In arguing that testimony enjoys irreducible prima facie authority as a source of warranted belief, Coady points out that in some circumstances, testimony can override first-person eyewitness evidence. Of course that is not incompatible with Hume's reductionist thesis; but it also reinforces the justice of Hume's treatment of miracle reports: the testimony

of many with no axes to grind that such things don't happen can trump the "perceptions" of the few that suggest they have.

25. A classic example (Evans, HCJF, pp. 236, 351, following C. S. Lewis) is the argument that either Jesus was the Son of God, or else a fraud or mad for asserting it. Since neither mendacious nor mad (as portrayed by his disciples!), he was divine. This simply ignores the semantic import of "Son of God" as a royal title. The argument is bad even if one *does* accept the literal divinity of a Son of God: see Daniel Howard-Snyder, "Was Jesus Mad, Bad, or God? . . . Or Merely Mistaken?" *Faith and Philosophy* (forthcoming, 2004).

26. Though he does accuse HBC scholars of just assuming without argument that faith (the inspiration of the HS) is not a reliable source of knowledge: "This view is not, of course, a result of historical scholarship . . ." (WCB, p. 410). This ignores the historical point just made. Plantinga (in conversation) has said that faith in the Great Things is phenomenologically distinguishable from other doctrinal beliefs in the way a conviction that $2+2=4$ is firmer than belief that, say, $2^{20}>10^6$. The evidence regarding religious conviction simply does not support Plantinga's suggestion.

27. See Steven E. Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent: Religious Ideology and Social Protest in the Sixteenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 85–86.

28. William Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 148.

29. Ibid., chap. 3; Plantinga (WCB, p. 125), and Evans (HCJF, p. 306) all make this appeal.

30. See Fales, "Mystical Experience as Evidence," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 40 (1996): 19–46.

31 For further evidence that disconfirms the A/C model, see Fales, "A Critical Study of Alvin Plantinga's *Warranted Christian Belief*," *Nous*, forthcoming.

32. That is a topic I cannot pursue here. Some hints can be found in Fales, "Truth, Tradition, and Rationality," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 6 (1996): 97–113; "The Ontology of Social Roles," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 7 (1997): 139–61; and "Successful Defense? A Review of *In Defense of Miracles*." *Philosophia Christi* 2, no. 3 (2001): 7–35.

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